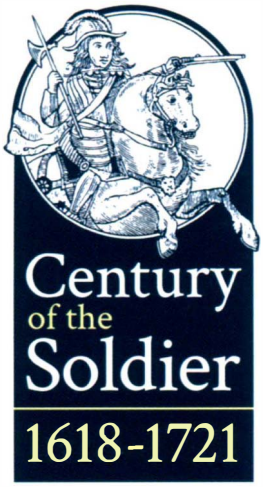
HEY FOR OLD ROBIN!

The Campaigns and Armies of the Earl of Essex during the First Civil War, 1642-44

CHRIS SCOTT & ALAN TURTON

Century of the Soldier
1618-1721
No.14



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Preface

This book was first mooted at a lunch at The Fleece Hotel in Cirencester at which Duncan Rogers and Charles Singleton of Helion asked if I, or any of my friends, had anything in our piles of manuscripts pertaining to the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries which had not yet seen the light of day. I knew I had lots of research notes on the Earl of Essex's campaigns, amassed during the preparation work for my book on the two Battles of Newbury, and several discarded chapters about what his army was doing prior to Waller's defeat on Roundway Down. I also knew I had plenty of notes from another book I had written with Alan Turton and Dr. Eric Gruber von Arni about Edgehill. The thought of making use of all that work appealed, and the idea of a book focusing upon Essex's armies gradually evolved. However, I felt I could not undertake such a task without Alan Turton whom I also knew had a great respect for the Earl of Essex and a lifelong interest in the forces which served under him. I recall him leading the cry of 'Hey for Old Robin!' when the Roundhead Association marched past the site of Essex's London home. So another lunch, this time in Lychpit, near Basing House where Alan was formerly the Curator, and the deal was sealed. Since then we had the perfect excuse for monthly get-togethers in the Hatchet Inn in the market place at Newbury where Wetherspoons' hospitality and endless free coffee refills kept us going, and from where my return to Swindon frequently took me across the sites of the 'victories' of Essex's army!

This resulting book seeks to address a gap in the military history literature of what we are told we should now call the British Civil Wars, by taking a comprehensive and hopefully fresh look at the armies which served under Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex and what they achieved during his time as Parliament's Captain General. It does not purport however, to be an academic tome. Obviously we have used primary sources and contemporary commentaries but we have also made use of modern scholarship and recent research as well as Alan's earlier work on the regiments that fought for Essex published in two booklets by Partizan Press: one concerning the Horse entitled *The Chief Strength of the Army*, and another he co-wrote with Stuart Peachy called *Old Robin's Foote*. Similarly we have used my work on Essex's campaigns and battles in *Edgehill, the Battle Re-Interpreted* (written with Alan Turton and Dr. Eric Gruber von Arni) and *The Battles of Newbury,* both published by Pen & Sword.

The Battles of Newbury was criticised in a hobby magazine for putting two battles in one publication and thus not spending enough time on each

engagement; this was despite there being 64 pages devoted to the actual fighting, far more than one usually finds in so many so-called battle books. So rather than attempting to describe all those battles fought by Essex's army in one volume, we limit our descriptions to very brief summaries, and in discussion focus on the direct influence Essex had on the strategy and any personal part he played in them, as well as any significant action fought by any of his regiments. We leave the in-depth description and analysis of each engagement to more battle-specific books, and in each chapter we list those volumes which readers who are interested in the relevant major battle, may care to consult for details of the action.

Similarly we leave out the lists of regiments and the names of those officers who served in them as they are a topic worthy of a dedicated work which, having gathered a lot of the information, we may undertake in a later book.

Chris Scott

Acknowledgements

Firstly we would like to thank Duncan Rogers and Charles Singleton of Helion for showing the initial interest and the subsequent support for this work. Also to Maksim Borisov, Dr Lesley Prince and Anthony Barton for their work on the maps and illustrations, and Ann Farr for the setting and layout of the book.

No book can be undertaken without the help of others and we would also like to thank the following people who have not only aided us in the creation of this work but those who have unstintingly given their help and support over the years. We would like to thank all the members of the various institutions visited or contacted who have been helpful. Regrettably we have not kept lists of places or names, but if any reader works or has worked in a library, archive, museum, muniment room or record office and has assisted with an obscure enquiry pertaining to the Earl of Essex or his armies, we thank you all.

In addition to those who helped directly we would also like to thank our friends in The Roundhead Association, especially Colonel Nicholas Devereux's Regiment, for their continued support and proffered ideas about sources and interpretation. Similar thanks are due to colleagues in The Battlefields Trust and The International Guild of Battlefield Guides; the confidence derived from the support of these learned and enthusiastic bodies is beyond measure.

Without the efforts and support of these people and institutions this work would not have been possible. However, our deepest thanks go to our wives, Pamela Golding and Nicola Turton who not only encouraged us through the days when the work seemed interminable but also gave of their own expertise in their respective fields but mostly for being there and … for everything.

Swindon and Lychpit 2016

Introduction

The Earl of Essex was the first commanding officer of the first army created by the Parliament to combat the forces of King Charles I in August 1642. However, despite overcoming the problems of scratch-building an army to take a peaceful civil population to war, organising and managing several admirable campaigns and orchestrating several successful battles, Essex does not enjoy a good reputation in the modern literature. He is often dismissed as rather indecisive and over-cautious, and somewhat ungenerously, as being prone to pedantry and frequent bungling of operations. Much of the criticism is based upon contemporary letters and pamphlets written by his personal and political enemies, and those who wished to wage a far more aggressive war against the king than was then the 'party line' in Parliament. Historians make use of what period material is available and some can tend to ignore the inherent bias and even personal agendas of its authors. Consequently, we often have a one-sided view of Essex both as a man and as a general. It is time for a reappraisal of Essex's military abilities and an appreciation of the achievements of the regiments who served under him. Hopefully this work will begin that process.

This is certainly not an apologia for Essex but it does endeavour to reveal him and his military career in a more favourable light than has hitherto been seen. It does not pretend to an in-depth investigation into his abilities, but despite volumes having been written about military leadership it is worth noting that the old-fashioned ideas of the ability to see both the big and the small pictures, flexibility, aggression, integrity, and consistency, have been overlaid by a plethora of other qualities. It is now necessary to appreciate the performance of an individual in terms of the strategic, operational and tactical evidence as well as organisational attitudes, behaviours and relationships.[1] Moreover such a study should also examine the socio-economic and religious factors of men in combat and period, culture and human dynamics influences. It is the work of a far greater study to apply this evolving set of notions to the achievements of Essex but it is worth noting that given his ability to relate to his men, to understand their viewpoints and to represent them to Parliament – even at his own cost – Essex demonstrated a quality which Major General Frank Richardson, a psychiatrist in the Royal

1 Carpenter, S.D.M., *Military Leadership in the British Civil Wars 1642-1651 'The Genius of this Age'* (Abingdon, Cass, 2005).

Army Medical Corps, advocated as a key element, that successful leadership is intrinsically bound up in the preservation of high morale.[2]

There is an unfortunate modern trend which labels new insights or even reinterpretations as revisionist but this is not the intention of this work. Rather it endeavours to tell the story of both Essex's achievements as a general of the army and of those units which delivered them. Essex's regiments had their fair share of action including skirmishes both large and small, and the major battles of Edgehill, Newbury I, Lostwithiel, and Newbury II. Moreover, they took part in the successful taking of Reading and the relief of Gloucester. They also spent plenty of time in the daily toil of soldiering, trudging the roads of Southern England roads and slogging their way through rain and mud as well as sitting in garrison and suffering the ravages of disease epidemics. Being armies of the early war these regiments came fresh to conflict. Many of the soldiers who served with Essex were initially raised from the inhabitants of London and its surrounding region and were ordinary London tradesmen and artisans and not merely its underclass. They came from all walks of life and reflected a cross-section of the people determined to make a change to the way in which they were governed.

2 *Ibid*, p.15.

Conventions

Dates prior to 1752 are recorded with the year beginning 1 January not 25 March. Numbers up to nineteen are in words whilst numbers from 20 are in figures except in quotations or for ease of comparison. All monetary values and measurements stated are traditional English and Imperial.

The use of capital letters for military ranks or civil offices is restricted to references made to specific people or offices, and not as descriptive terms, hence King Charles I is referred to as the king. Capitals are also used for delineating those parts of the army known as the Horse and Foot although this convention is not followed when referring to the artillery. We do not use the pejorative terms of 'roundhead' or 'cavalier', preferring parliamentarian and royalists, nor do we confuse parliamentarian with parliamentary.

In spelling the text employs the use of the modern 'ise' rather than the 'ize' form of ending. The spelling of names often varied during the seventeenth century and many of those mentioned in the text appear in several formats in contemporary documents. The form chosen for each name is that used by a recent published authority. Quotations are preceded and ended by the use of the single parenthesis, whilst quotations of more than three lines in length are contained within a discrete paragraph of restricted width and close set type. Words from a foreign language are shown in italics.

In the footnotes works are cited first with author's surname and initials followed by the title and publishing details plus any relevant volume, chapter or page reference. If the work is cited again, only the surname appears followed by either the key word in the title or op.cit. or *ibid.* and any necessary additional reference.

Glossary

Terms used throughout the text which may need some explanation?

Colour: An infantry flag or ensign. Ensign is also the rank and name of the officer carrying it.
Cornet: A cavalry flag, and also the rank and name of the officer carrying it.
Cuirassier: Heavy cavalryman in three-quarter armour. There were very few units in Essex's Army.
Dragoon: Mounted infantryman.

Harquebusier: Light cavalryman in back & breast, often in buff coats and who made up the majority of Essex's Cavalry.
Musketeers: Soldiers trained in the use of single shot, muzzle-loading, smoothbore firearms.
Officers: Men holding military rank and exercising authority over others.
General Officers: men holding the rank of brigadier and above.
Senior Field Officers: colonel, lieutenant-colonel and sergeant-major;
Inferior Officers: captain and captain-lieutenant.
Junior Officers: lieutenant, ensign and cornet.
Non-Commissioned Officers: quartermaster, sergeant and corporal.
Pikemen: Soldiers trained in the use of a sixteen foot ash pole tipped with a razor sharp point.
Private Sentinel: An ordinary soldier with no rank.
Train /Trayne: The Artillery, Engineers and Baggage / Supply units of an army.

Abbreviations

Record Offices

TNA.	The National Archive, Kew.
HRO.	Hampshire Record Office, Winchester.
W&SHC.	Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre, Chippenham.

Libraries:

BL.	British Library, London.
Bod.	Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Museums:

BM.	British Museum.
NAM.	National Amy Museum.

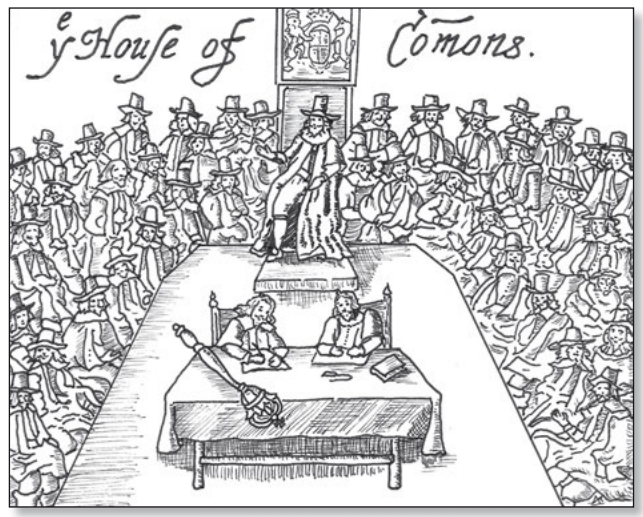
Documents:

BG.	Bibliotheca Goucestriensis.
CJ.	Journal of the House of Commons.
CL.	Journal of the House of Lords.
CSPD.	Calendar of State Papers, Domestic.
CSPT.	Calendar of State Papers, Treasury.
CSPV.	Calendar of State Papers Venetian.
ExP.	Exchequer Papers.
SP.	State Papers.
TM.	Tanner Manuscripts.
TT.	Thomason Tracts.
WO	War Office Papers.

1

Background

During the mid-seventeenth century, the British Civil Wars gradually engulfed England, Wales, Scotland, and then Ireland, with repercussions for an already war-torn Europe. The highly complex, interwoven reasoning for why the civil wars were fought was based upon a fundamental desire for change which permeated the inter-related social, economic, religious, political and philosophical aspects of society and manifested itself at international, national, local and personal levels. It was an all-encompassing affair. Fuelled by individualism, self-confidence and opportunism, it was also bound up in the thinking behind the Reformation; in that the new force of reason-led capitalism demanded change from the old ways whilst faith-based feudalism resisted it. Thus a powerful sense of discontent with the status quo, and pressure for change permeated all walks of life, being described by those who lived through it as 'the world turned upside down'.



The House of Commons – after an engraving of 1643, re-drawn by Alan Turton. (Turton Collection)

England did not have the calibre of government to cope with such a fundamental upheaval. King Charles I, blinkered by his father's doctrine of Divine Right, stubbornly resisted most evolutionary moves and within five years of being crowned had called and dismissed three Parliaments and reverted to the practice of personal rule. During the next eleven years he and his advisors presided over the collapse of government and the decline into national bankruptcy, culminating in an ill thought-out scheme to impose the Anglican English Prayer Book upon Presbyterian Scotland which led to the military and financial debacles known as The Bishops' Wars. Almost destitute, the king was obliged to summon his fourth Parliament in 1640.

This Parliament, led in the Commons by M.P. John Pym, epitomised the desire for change, and fanned by resentment of the mismanagement of Charles' personal rule, Pym and his associates began lobbying to bring it about. Royal prerogative was attacked and both Houses split into Court and

Country factions, dividing roughly along political and religious lines but with a dangerous undercurrent of being for or against obeying the king's will. The wrangling between these two factions grew increasingly bitter in 1641, as they reacted to a rebellion in Ireland which ignited passions, fuelled prejudices and prompted panic in England. Believing that this crisis handed them a powerful lever to exert pressure on the king, Parliament then set out a list of nineteen grievances which they wanted addressed. This list was called the Grand Remonstrance and was a direct challenge to the king's personal rule as well as containing an open attack upon the Catholic influence of his queen, Henrietta Maria of France. A furious Charles, apparently spurred on by his queen, responded in January 1642 by abusing parliamentary privilege and took an armed body into the House of Commons where he tried unsuccessfully to arrest five of the most politically active members. These men had been forewarned of their likely arrest and fled the House, their 'saviour' being the Earl of Essex. Thwarted, frustrated, and fearful of reprisals by similar unlawful acts, the king left London for Oxford taking with him his most ardent supporters. Others followed, including the more openly royalist members of Parliament from both Houses. Eventually there then existed two bodies, both calling themselves the Parliament of England; the Oxford Parliament which was predominantly traditional and the London Parliament which was, by and large, reformist. By April 1642 there was virtually open war and Charles was further infuriated by humiliating attempts to demonstrate his power in the North, especially at Hull where Sir John Hotham, the governor of this important port and arsenal, refused to open the gates to the king's forces.

Although the king and the Parliament in London were hardly on speaking terms, the Irish problem did not go away and, amid lurid tales of atrocities against Protestants, there was a general clamour for a force to be sent to put down the insurrection and protect Protestants from the Catholics. Parliament was charged with creating and sending five regiments for that purpose and they set about recruiting on 6 July 1642. However, despite the urgency and the furore, recruitment was slow. The men selected to lead these regiments were Patrick Fitzmaurice, Lord Kerry; Philip, Lord Wharton; Colonel William Bamfield; Colonel Thomas Ballard; and Colonel Charles Essex. Lord Kerry was to be the commander-in-chief, and by 26 July it had been decided that they were destined for Munster. However many of the senior and inferior officers appeared to have changed their mind about going and on 20 August their replacements were approved by Parliament. Set against the rising tension in England, and with Parliament passing a second recruitment order for an army of its own on 12 July, recruitment for the this army for Ireland was understandably not very successful, although the combined efforts of these new officers did manage to raise one full regiment, Lord Kerry's. It was deemed serviceable and was by order of 5 October despatched to Munster under its lieutenant colonel, William St. Leger and with a very different complement of officers than were originally enlisted. They went despite the very obvious need for men in Parliament's own army. Their orders reveal that they were hopefully to consist of 200 volunteers for each of the 10 captains' companies, and that these 2,000 men were to

take ship at Bristol or Minehead. The remainder of the men raised for the other four regiments did not go to Ireland, but were retained for service in England. So upon landing at Cork or Kinsale, 1,000 of Kerry's men were used to form the backbone of additional locally-raised Irish regiments. Kerry was to be not only their Commander-in-Chief but also Governor of Munster and Chief Governor of Ireland. Their instructions were all-embracing and were effectively a carte-blanche to do whatever they wished.

> … Lord of Kerry, and his said Regiment, shall have Power to invade, subdue, kill, and slay, the said Rebels, and to do and perform all such Acts and Things which shall conduce to the subduing of the said Rebels … [1]

Their story does not concern us here, other than to note that they and St Leger came back to England in 1643 to serve the king in the guise of the Duke of York's Regiment.

After being unsuccessful in gaining support and supplies in the North, Charles returned to the Midlands and on 21 July 1642 he resolved to make Nottingham the base for any further operations. Although not declared, open armed conflict was inevitable and indeed the first blood of the looming civil war was spilt on 27 July in Manchester during a skirmish between local armed groups. Another outbreak of violence occurred at Marshall's Elm near Street in Somerset on 4 August. By then, declarations of intent to support one of the two sides were being avidly sought, and caused many heated debates across England.

Charles initially reacted by issuing a proclamation on 12 August, which required every man capable of bearing arms and who lived within twenty miles of Nottingham to assemble at the castle to witness the raising of his royal standard. Before they could come together however, he tried a demonstration of his power with the men he already had gathered about him but was humiliated once again when he tried to enter Coventry on 20 August. The citizens slammed shut their gates in the face of his force which then proceeded to fire into the town, killing a man. On 22 August 1642 the king took the dramatic last step into open war and duly raised his standard against his Parliament; against the representatives of his own people. In reality it was a pretty sorry affair, taking place in bad weather on Standard Hill outside the walls of the derelict castle and indeed at one point the wind was so strong it caught the heavy flag and dashed it to the muddy ground. The weather had implications for the turnout and the ceremony was not well attended and neither were three subsequent unfurlings on three successive days. He expected thousands, but in total only about 300 men rallied to his call. He then issued his Commission of Array to summon all loyal men across the country to join him in his fight to reaffirm his right to rule his kingdom. The war had begun.

Despite the inauspicious start, the raising of the royal standard caused consternation in Parliament and forced the issue of choosing sides for many

1 Firth.C.H. & R S Rait, R.S.,(eds.) 'October 1642: Order to raise Voluntiers for Munster.', in *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660,* (London, 1911), p. 32; http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/acts-ordinances-interregnum/p32

men. The members were divided and in dramatic scenes they declared openly for one side or the other. Many members of the Court faction who had remained in London and tried to bring about conciliation joined those who felt obliged to answer his call, and went to join the king, whilst those members who remained behind tried to oppose the Country faction as it passed the Militia Ordnance and ordered it read across England to raise troops to defend themselves and the rights of Parliament. Events were now driven by the need for change. When change by constructive means is denied them, men will affect it by destructive means – or as Clausewitz was to say, 'war is … a continuation of political activity by other means'.[2]

In order to wage war, both sides needed armies, so the opening moves were based upon strategies to recruit volunteers and take control of fortresses and arsenals, and other important bases for military activity, or places of commercial significance such as the ports and manufacturing towns. London declared for Parliament and across the country, cities, towns and even counties declared their allegiance until the kingdom became a patchwork of allegiances, alliances and spheres of influence. How a side was chosen was a complicated matter although this was sometimes founded in things other than loyalty to either cause, for example in rural areas the people were often influenced to join whichever cause their local lord espoused. Reasons as to why different persons or places aligned with a certain side are beyond the scope of this work, many did not or could not take sides whilst among those who did, divided loyalties split town councils, communities and even families.

In this unheard of state of civil war, Parliament was keen to place their reliance upon the established London Trained Bands for their defence, but they were also very aware that they too needed an armed force capable and willing to take the field if they were to match any strategic moves made by the royalists gathering in Nottingham. Parliament had that small force of troops which had been ostensibly for service in Ireland (the 6 July army), and it had the beginnings of its own new army (the 12 July army) but both were by no means sufficient, and indeed were not only small in numbers but also poorly supplied and equipped. This combined force was however to be its main fighting field force and they appointed a man to lead it. Their choice fell upon Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex. He was indeed the natural choice because he probably had the most military experience of all the potential candidates and was not only a respected member of the nobility but a well known public figure. Moreover he was an established leader of the opposition to Charles' personal rule and a charismatic and popular man. Essex was appointed Captain-General of a partially non-existent army so his first task was to dramatically increase the size of those units already raised for Ireland and to add significant additional regiments to their number. It was a formidable task but his fame and popularity coupled with his excellent ability in staff work and organisation came to the fore.

2 Clausewitz, von, C. Howard, M. and Paret, P. (Trans.), *Vom Krieg*, (Princeton University Press, 1976/84 from the original German published Berlin: Dumlers Verlag, 1832), pp. 75-89.

Apart from these already constituted partial units, Essex's army started to form in late July 1642 when Parliament's agents began listing men at the New Artillery Gardens in the City as volunteers in an independent army for Parliament.[3] The men were principally drawn from the City of London and Southwark; the two big urban conurbations on the north and south banks of the Thames, and supposedly did not poach members of the London Trained Bands. Again recruiting was not as popular as Parliament had hoped and the listing clerks appear to have collected only enough names to fill the rank and file of three regiments. However, the number of men who volunteered to be commissioned as officers surpassed expectations; there were sufficient officer volunteers to staff 20 regiments! These officer names on these lists were allocated to companies, and on 1 August the men too were put into companies and those companies subsequently grouped into regiments.[4] These first three units were Colonel Denzil Holles' Regiment, Colonel Sir Henry Chomley's Regiment and Sir John Merrick's Regiment and each one was up to the required strength of any drill book designed unit – that is around 1,200 strong. Parliament's solution to the shortage of forces was to set itself a considerable target of some further 17 regiments of Foot and to throw its recruitment net wider. The catchment area for enlistment was spread beyond the City and Southwark to include the rest of London and the surrounding area. This occurred between 16 and 21 August and conveniently encompassed some of Essex's estates to the north-east of the capital.[5] Many of the great men who were to assume colonelcies of these future units were also permitted to encourage men on their estates and those of their friends to enlist. It is interesting to note that the four units already recruited for Ireland were included in this 17, supposedly because never having reached proper strength they needed more men to complete them.

Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex was appointed to the elevated rank of Lord-General of the Army, which technically placed him in command of this first army and all other future armies to be raised; a distinction which was to be the seed of future rancour and dissent among aspiring military-minded aristocrats and gentlemen.

The twenty regiments of Foot destined for this first army were:

Transferred From the Army of Munster:

- Col. Philip Lord Wharton's Regiment
- Col. William Bamfield's Regiment
- Col. Thomas Ballard's Regiment
- Col. Charles Essex's Regiment

Initially Raised:

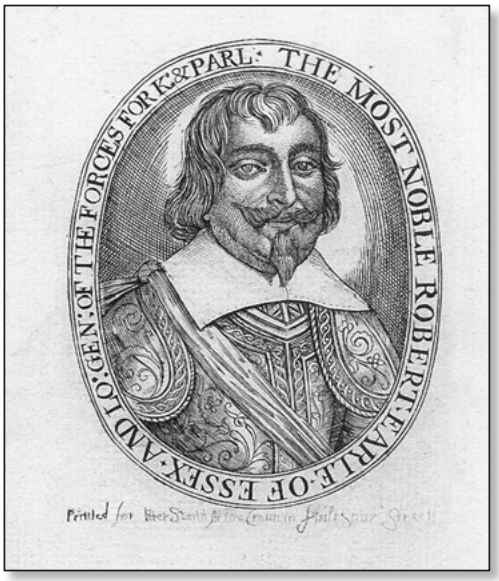
- Col. Denzil Holles' Regiment
- Col. Sir Henry Cholmley's Regiment
- Col. Sir John Merrick's Regiment

Subsequently Raised:

3 TT. E. 108 (15). Independent being supposedly not tied to London and also free of royal association.

4 TT. E. 109 (35). It is not known how these allocations were made but to do so by parish location would seem likely.

5 E. 239. (10):



Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex – Peter Stent. (Turton Collection).

Lord General, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex's Regiment
General, Henry Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough's Regiment
Col. Henry Grey, Earl of Stamford's Regiment
Col. William Fiennes, Lord Saye and Sele's Regiment
Col. Robert Greville, Lord Brooke's Regiment
Col. Edward Montagu, Lord Mandeville's Regiment
Col. John, Lord Robartes' Regiment
Col. John Carey, Lord Rochford's Regiment
Col. Sir William Constable's Regiment
Col. Sir William Fairfax's Regiment
Col. Thomas Grantham's Regiment
Col. John Hampden's Regiment
Col. Oliver St. John's Regiment

Although a number of these colonels had previous military experience the majority were in post because they were leading figures in the Commons or Lords. Being eminent, and supposedly busy men, the day to day running and organization of their regiments was therefore left to their lieutenant colonels and majors who were, where possible, military men. The captains of companies in each unit, once they had received Essex's signed commission, set about recruiting. Volunteers in London left their names at a number of recruiting stations and were then allocated to the various regiments. Outside of the City recruiting was done by beat of drum on market day in the many small towns of the surrounding counties. The age of recruits was between 16 and 60 and they came from all walks of life. Many of the London volunteers were apprentices and journeymen, such as Nehemiah Wharton, who served as a sergeant in Holles' Regiment. William Allen, a felt-maker from Southwark, served in the same regiment until it's destruction and then in the newly raised regiment of Philip Skippon until at least 1647. Amongst the first to enlist in the infantry were 71 dyers, 49 sadlers, 124 shoemakers, 157 tailors, 186 weavers and 88 butchers. Such were the ordinary men who made up the new army.

It is interesting to note that the order to despatch Lord Kerry's Regiment to Ireland states that the men were to be issued with their arms when they arrived in Ireland so it is not unreasonable to suggest that those weapons initially designated for them were retained deliberately to arm soldiers in this new army, as was a stock of clothing. Clothing for three of the four initial regiments was drawn from that assembled for the Irish Expedition and the commissioned official supplier, Stephen Eastwick, took delivery of it from the Irish stores on 19 August and handed it over on 22 August. Whether this clothing went directly to these regiments or via other middlemen for transportation and delivery to the soldiers is unclear. However, this clothing issue apparently honoured part of Parliament's promise to clothe their regiments at their own expense by an order of 6 August which states that before they marched out of London the men were set to receive coats, shoes, shirts and caps.[6] The caps appear not to have been issued but the soldiers

6 Peachey, S., & Turton, A., *Old Robin's Foot* (Leigh-on-Sea, Partizan Press, 1987), p.4.

did receive snapsacks – tubular leather shoulder bags in which the soldier carried his food rations ('snap'), and any personal belongings.

This issue of coats is interesting as it implies that even if somewhat hastily made, the demands of bulk purchasing would have meant they were uniform in colour. The soldier's coat was straight cut, made from one yard of woollen broad cloth, and distinguished by small rolls of material at the top of the sleeves. The coats of the 1642 issue were lined, usually with a contrasting colour, but later ones were only faced. Initially soldiers were not given breeches but were expected to supply their own, so many men ended in rags, as exemplified by two of Sir Samuel Luke's garrison at Newport Pagnell who had only one pair of breeches between them, so that only one man could be on duty at any one time. Eventually, through necessity, breeches began to become part of normal issue. They too were usually of wool, lined with linen and had a pair of deep leather pockets.

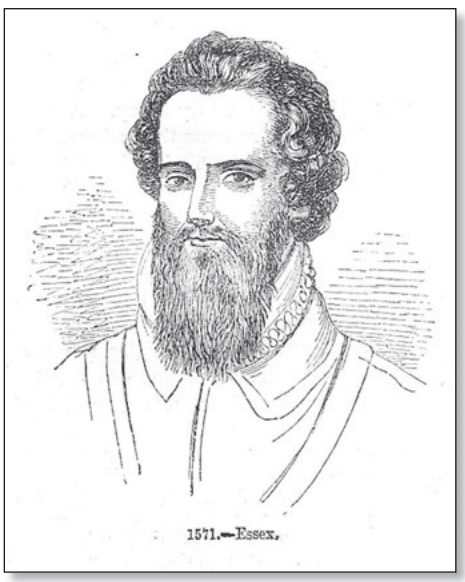
The basic undergarment was the knee-length, linen or hemp shirt. It was an important item, as shirts were sometimes used as an inducement to enlist, however only one shirt per man was issued. It was the lack of clean linen which contributed to the numerous outbreaks of camp fever which weakened both armies throughout the coming war.

Stockings were either of knitted wool or cloth cut on the cross, and were kept up at the knee with leg ties. The foot soldiers were issued with a pair of latchet shoes which were made of leather, low cut and straight lasted to fit either foot. For many men the prospect of being clothed and shod at someone else's expense, and being given basic foodstuffs as well as the promise of a daily rate of pay must have seemed a manna-like windfall.

Gradually the numbers grew; the regiments steadily filled their ranks and gathered together the weapons to arm the men, along with the necessary equipment and supplies until finally Parliament and its Lord General had their army which was independent of the king and indeed willing to fight him.

2

From Boyhood to Captain General

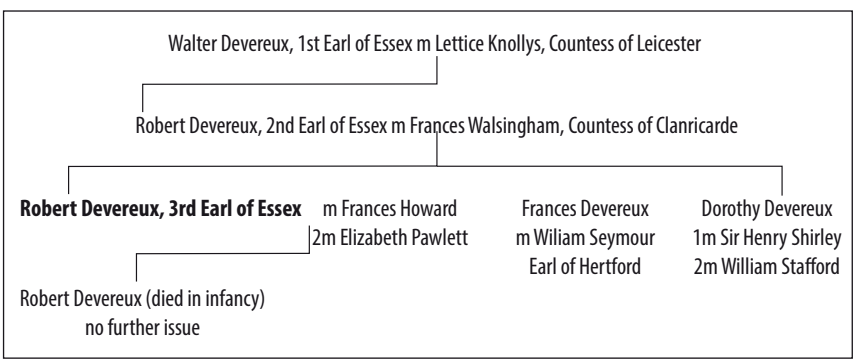


The 2nd Earl of Essex, who was executed for rebellion in 1601, from an old engraving. (Turton Collection)

Robert Devereux was born on 11 January 1591, in Seething Lane, London, at the home of his maternal grandmother Lady Walsingham, the only daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham, who had been Queen Elizabeth I's powerful Secretary of State and personal advisor. Robert was born into an eminent, noble and powerful family: his father was Elizabeth's favourite, Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex and his mother was Frances Walsingham, Countess of Essex and Clanricarde.

The Genealogy of the Earl of Essex

Named after his father, Robert grew up in London and was educated at Eton College. When not at school, he lived at Essex House, his father's extensive property on the banks of the Thames, south of the Strand. He was brought up in wealthy surroundings and moved in aristocratic company. His father had been a popular, charismatic and influential man in Elizabeth's court and it has been suggested that he was also the queen's lover in a somewhat tempestuous relationship. After leading an unsuccessful campaign in Ireland and quarrelling with Elizabeth he fell from royal favour.

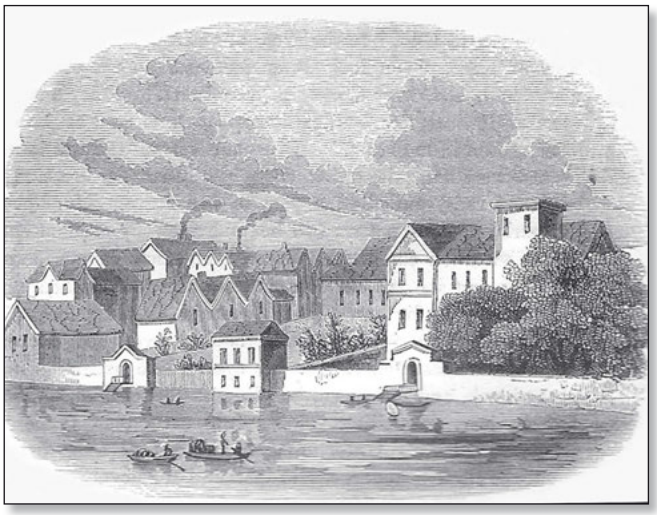

Walter Devereux, 1st Earl of Essex m Lettice Knollys, Countess of Leicester
Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex m Frances Walsingham, Countess of Clanricarde
Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex
m Frances Howard
2m Elizabeth Pawlett
Frances Devereux
m Wiliam Seymour
Earl of Hertford
Dorothy Devereux
1m Sir Henry Shirley
2m William Stafford
Robert Devereux (died in infancy)
no further issue

It was a dramatic fall which entailed being placed under house arrest and brought about the loss of offices, status and influence. Determined to regain his elevated position, and not meeting with any success in the diverse and varied schemes he undertook, in 1601 he made a desperate attempt to force the queen to restore him to what he believed to be his rightful place; and he did it by armed rebellion! Although he maintained his intentions were peaceful and that he had no intention of any harm befalling her majesty, he did in fact try to seize her and the throne. It was a failure that ended in a siege of the family home, Essex House. The house was stormed, Essex was arrested and the young Devereux's father was then tried and executed for treason. The forfeiture of his titles, and with them their revenues, plunged the family into desperate financial straits. The ten year old boy was obliged to leave Eton and became a social outcast. It is only speculation but Essex probably learnt the lesson of the cupidity of monarchs and how to deal with being in an isolated position, possibly breeding resilience in the face of adversity.

The succession of James I saw the reversal of several of Elizabeth's policies which included the restoration of the Devereux family titles. The family had a lot of powerful friends and indeed at the time of his father's rebellion there was a considerable faction whom, although they did not feel inclined to join in his plot were in sympathy with it and his grievances and aspirations. These people had to be wooed and brought back into the sphere of court influence. The Earl Southampton who had been involved in the rebellion was released from the Tower among others who had merely been suspected, and with special permission from the king and Parliament, Robert became the 3rd Earl of Essex in 1604, and was able to complete his studies. He attended Merton College, Oxford from where he graduated as a MA in 1605. Probably having the same charismatic personality as his father, he initially developed a good relationship with the new Stuart royal family and became a friend of the king's eldest son Henry, Prince of Wales who was of a similar age. However, Essex's relationship with the royal family did not continue as a happy one. He tended to favour the policies of those arguing for political and legal reform and moved in circles that advocated resistance to the will of the king, thus directly opposing James' leanings towards personal rule. This faction was frequently involved in heated disputes and exchanges with those who favoured royal prerogative, or the Divine Right of Kings as it became known. Even King James I himself quarrelled with the young Essex. During one such passionate argument James is said to have made a violent outburst recalling the rebellion of Essex's father, and shouting 'I fear thee not, Essex, if thou wert as well beloved as thy father, and hadst 40,000 men at thy heels … ' alluding to the perceived rebellious nature of the family. [1]

Marriage in those times was often more of a business contract in a web of family alliances in the pursuit of power and money than a love match and with the permission of James I, at the age of 13, Robert was married to Frances Howard, a 14 year old member of the influential Howard family. The wedding was probably at the king's instigation, in a yet another move to woo the pro-Essex people and unite quarrelsome court factions, Frances

1 Devereux, W. B., *Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex* (London, J Murray, 1853), volume 2, p. 290.



Essex House, engraving after Hollar. (Turton Collection)

was the daughter of Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk who had sat on the commission that sent Essex's father to the block. The religious ceremonies completed, James commissioned and paid for an extravagant two-day event which included a court masque, called *Hymenaei*, written by Ben Jonson and staged by Inigo Jones, to which the wealthy and influential members of the court were invited and even took part.[2] Over 5-6 January 1606 this masque and a staged grand 'Fight at the Barriers' were part of a spectacular display of unity between both the Stuart/Devereux and the Scots/English factions. The event was politically far more than a simple celebration of Essex's marriage.[3] Essex learnt at a young age how monarchs used people as pawns in their power plays.

As both bride and groom were young teenagers they observed the practice of the period among the aristocracy and never consummated their marriage. She returned to her family home whilst he undertook to finish his education with a grand European tour. He was absent from England from 1607 to 1609, and whilst he was away, his more mature bride took the king's favourite Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester to her bed. It was the scandal of the day especially as Carr was rumoured to be the king's bedfellow as well.

Upon his return Essex was stricken with smallpox which permanently disfigured his face. After his recovery both he and his wife tried to have the marriage annulled, Frances saying publically that her husband was impotent and that he had never made love to her, due to his inability to have an erection. Essex countered that indeed that might be the case but it was only with her that this situation arose, brought on he said, by her continuous nagging, name calling and rejection. He maintained that she 'reviled him, and miscalled him, terming him a cow and coward, and beast'.[4] Poor Essex was ridiculed but he did not suffer alone, Frances was examined by a doctor and declared still a virgin which was a marvel since Carr had been her lover for some time and, rumour had it, that she was not 'unsullied' before her wedding to Essex. The sorry situation was further scandalised in a mocking ballad which included the line 'The Dame was inspected, but fraud interjected a Maid of greater perfection'. Possibly to Essex's relief the annulment was granted in September 1613 and Frances quickly married Carr who was then Earl of Somerset, an ennoblement that galled Essex and further soured his relationship with James I.[5] In 1616 Essex may have had some grim

2 Shakespeare is supposed to have turned down an invitation to write this entertainment although he is known to have attended.

3 It was part of an elaborate plan to instil a feeling of harmony and unity, paving the way for James' attempt to unify his two crowns of England and Scotland into one Britain.

4 Haynes, A., *Sex in Elizabethan England* (Wrens Park Publishing, 1997), p. 129.

5 James appears to have liked his favourites to marry, even those with whom he had homosexual relationships.

satisfaction when he was called to sit on in a jury to pass judgement upon both husband and wife who were charged for being parties to the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury. The jury found them guilty and it is believed Essex advocated the death penalty for both.[6] That decision was duly rendered but the sentence was never executed, supposedly due to Carr's erstwhile intimate association with James.

Essex's first experience of military service came in 1620 when he found a place with Sir Horace Vere who was leading an English contingent which went to the continent to fight for the Protestant cause in the Thirty Years War, where he was to serve in five successive campaigns. In 1621 he transferred to Prince Maurice of Nassau's army in the Palatinate and then, a year later, he changed armies again, joining Count Ernst von Mansfeld under whom he took part in the Battle of Fleurus in August 1622.[7] Essex spent a lot of time on Mansfeld's staff but saw action again as the colonel of a regiment in 1624 during the abortive attempt to relieve the Siege of Breda, but then, having seen service in Germany and the Low Countries, he returned to England.

Frances Howard, Essex's first wife, from an old engraving. (Turton Collection)

Although Essex did not have a distinguished military career on the continent he was in almost continual service and gained a lot of experience in staff work, both in quarters and on campaign which meant he was well versed in the management of military operations and the implementation of strategy. One successful aspect of his time abroad was the development of a remarkable ability to raise troops and recruit men to his units and his causes; more evidence that he did indeed exert a winning charisma and could inspire men. It was perhaps this ability that secured him another military position in the service of his own country. In 1625 he was appointed vice-admiral of the fleet and commanded a squadron of ships in the navy. Moreover he was also appointed to a colonelcy of a regiment of Foot. Both commands involved service in the ill-fated Expedition to Cadiz under Sir Edward Cecil. Again he returned home having learnt a great deal, particularly about the effect of poor intelligence.[8]

On his return he settled down to a life of a landed nobleman, dividing his time between his house on the Strand in London when he sat in the House of Lords in Parliament, and his estates in Essex. Although it no longer exists,

6 Somerset, A., *Unnatural Murder – Poison at the Court of James* (London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997).

7 Cust, Sir E., *Lives of the Warriors of the Civil Wars of France and England* (London, 1867), p. 276.

8 Cecil initially got into Cadiz Bay but allowed the Spanish fleet to escape and found a heavily defended city. He permitted his men to pillage local stocks of wine and although his officers managed to get most of his inebriated force back onto the ships, they abandoned over a thousand drunks who were murdered. Cecil then tried to capture some Spanish galleons but they eluded him. Riddled with disease, the expedition returned home having achieved nothing.

The House of Lords, after a contemporary engraving of 1643 re-drawn by Alan Turton. (Turton Collection)

Essex House was a great Tudor mansion on the south side of the Strand. [9]

It was built in the 1570s for Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and it had been passed on to Dudley's stepson the 2nd Earl of Essex in 1588 who renamed it Essex House. It was a grand building set in spacious gardens and grounds which reached down to the river, and had been part of the lands belonging to the Knights Templar. The 'palace' was recorded as having 42 bedrooms as well as a banqueting hall, picture gallery and chapel and extensive kitchens and stables and sundry service buildings. Essex leased part of the house to his brother-in-law William Seymour, Marquis of Hertford, who shared his political stance with regards to the king's resistance to reform. This close relationship came to an end when Hertford went over to the king and in time became a general in the royal army during the first civil war. The property went out of the Devereux family ownership after the Restoration because of debt and the house itself was finally demolished in the mid-1670s and the land sold.

During the 1620s, and although by no means a commoner, Essex espoused the Country faction, joining with men from both houses who were bound together in their growing opposition to the views and beliefs of those members directly influenced by the new king, Charles I. The Court faction made no secret of either their rigid obedience to royal will or their enmity towards this opposition. The division between the two sides became more polarised during 'the eleven years of personal rule' when Charles eschewed Parliament and ruled England without recourse to the representatives of its people. However much as the king hoped this would put an end to political debate and argument, and indeed to opposition meetings, it did not. Instead the Country faction held both open and clandestine meetings and even more plans were drawn up for reform. Essex rose in popularity and esteem as one of the leaders of this opposition to government by the monarch, and his small oligarchy of advisers. Other important opposition members originally from the Lords were: Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford; Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton; Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick; William Fiennes, Viscount Saye and Sele; and William, Baron Spencer. Essex was also friends with one of the king's strongest and most adversarial critics from the House of Commons, John Pym, along with George Digby and John Hampden.

9 Essex Street named after the house is virtually opposite the modern Royal Courts of Justice.

Elizabeth Pawlett, Essex's second wife, engraving after Hollar. (Turton Collection)

In 1630, amid the political wrangling, Essex married again. His second wife was Elizabeth Pawlett, the eldest daughter of a former High Sherriff of Wiltshire, Sir William Pawlett. Pawlett himself had died a year or two before the wedding so marriage into the Devereux family must have been an attractive proposition for the unmarried Elizabeth. From Essex's point of view she too must have held a certain attraction as the Pawletts were well connected, and he could do with friends at court. There was also the opportunity for Essex to father sons and show that he was in no way to blame for the scandal attached to his first marriage.

Sadly this marriage too was a failure and by 1631 the couple had separated. Elizabeth kept to the London house whilst Robert retired to the country where it is said he involved himself with amateur military activities, possibly the local trained bands. Despite their differences, the public image of the marriage suggests that the couple were not as mutually distant as Essex's first marriage had been, and on 5 November 1636 they had a son, Robert Devereux, Viscount Hereford. Yet even this event was coloured by private enmity and tragedy. It appears that Elizabeth may well have taken Sir Thomas Uvedale as her lover and that Essex threatened that he would not acknowledge the child as his. The baby Robert's birth and his father's identity remains a mystery as he died of the plague barely a month after being born. If this was not all Essex had to bear, his brother-in-law, Hertford, fanned the rumours of Essex being cuckolded again, although this was strenuously denied by the man who would later become Elizabeth's second husband, Sir Thomas Higgons. Higgons had little motive for such a declaration but it was probably not a coincidence that Hertford, now a political adversary, had also stood to inherit Essex's fortune and estates if Essex died without direct issue.

During the civil wars a lot of propaganda was made from Essex's unfaithful wives and indeed his lack of heirs. A modern historian has suggested that he had the condition hypogonadism, popularly known today as 'male hormone deficiency'.[10] However this is unlikely as portraits of him depict a man with a full set of moustache and beard shaved and trimmed into the fashionable T shape which would have been nigh on impossible if he suffered from this affliction. Moreover he was known to quarrel easily and to maintain such disputes aggressively with offers to fight duels or even less ritualised physical combats (he was quick to raise his fists); again this is an unlikely disposition for one suffering with this complaint.

Despite the whispering scandal and his opposition role in Parliament, Essex was created a Knight of the Bath in 1638 and the following year was appointed Lieutenant General of the Army of the North by Charles I for his war against the Scots.[11] However his leanings towards reform politics brought him the distrust and dislike of the more traditional members of the court, and despite him doing reasonably well in his military command. It must be

10 Haynes, op.cit., p.131.

11 The First Bishops' War.

noted however that he had hardly been in a demanding role in this effectively bloodless war. This hostility from the Court faction continued when Charles I was obliged to call Parliament in 1640 in an attempt to procure monies for his second war against Scotland; and indeed for a war in Ireland where a rebellion had broken out. Notably Essex did not receive the summons to any command in the Second Bishops' War, which made him even more embittered and hostile to those who advised the king and whom he began to perceive as personal enemies.

Parliament again became the forum for open and angry debates as those of the Country faction allied with more moderate members who were outraged by the failure of Charles' government and the economic crisis into which it had plunged the country. They saw opportunities for levering agreements to reform from the king, and to hold to account those advisors who had steered Charles on the disastrous course through the past years of misrule. This was the infamous Short Parliament as, annoyed with the members' effrontery and non-compliance with his wishes, Charles rapidly dissolved it after only two months.

However Essex was back in the House of Lords by November 1640 because the king had found it impossible to raise money for anything without the support of Parliament. This time Parliament was to sit almost continuously until 1653, earning itself the soubriquet 'The Long Parliament'. As part of an orchestrated campaign to bring down Charles' advisors, Parliament passed a Bill of Attainder in 1641 against one of his chief ministers and senior officers in the army, Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford. The case against Strafford is beyond the scope of this work but he was the first of Essex's old enemies to fall and King Charles, Strafford's friend and erstwhile supporter was obliged, albeit reluctantly, to sign his death warrant. Strafford sent an appeal to those who had condemned him and Essex, recalling the hatred shown to him in the past by the man now asking for his life, supposedly quoted the proverb 'Stone Dead hath no Fellow'. Strafford went to the block for treason.

Part of an attempt at rapprochement between king and Parliament saw Charles give seats on his Privy Council to those who were blatantly in opposition to him, and Essex was among those who took them. He was also reinstated to military command, becoming Captain General of all the forces in the English army to the south of the River Trent. In July 1641 he rose higher still and was appointed Lord Chamberlain. His star was in the ascendancy but was about to come crashing down. The reformers apparently pushed the king too far too quickly and, as is now believed, advised and goaded by his queen Henrietta Maria, in January 1642 Charles took an armed guard of soldiers into the House of Commons and tried to arrest Pym and four other leading political dissenters: John Hampden, Arthur Haselrig, Denzil Holles and William Strode. The king was frustrated in the attempt, namely because all five men had been told of the king's plans and had fled into hiding. It would seem that Essex was the man who sent them the warning. He was obviously under suspicion and began to absent himself from Privy Council meetings and frequently stayed away from court. One such absence occurred when the king called for the Council to meet in York during April 1642 and his non-appearance resulted in his dismissal from the

office of Lord Chamberlain. Essex was wise not to be present in York as it was from there that the king rode to Hull and tried to intimidate its governor Sir John Hotham, into allowing his accompanying royal forces to occupy the important port and replace the pro-Parliament garrison, and moreover to appropriate its arsenal. As well as ceasing to hold high office in Council, Essex's appointment as Captain General of the army also seems to have been deemed as having lapsed. The result of these moves against him drove him to a greater degree of intransigence.

The split between the king and his Parliament widened and disagreements flourished daily, one major point of contention being which institution, court or Parliament, had authority and thus control over the London Trained Bands, and this argument quickly spread to include all the militias all over the country. These bodies of men were trained and drilled in the use of weapons and acted as county or city defence forces which turned out in national and indeed local emergencies, be they threats of foreign invasion or civil disturbance.[12] They may not have been steady professionals but they were adequate and very numerous. The full-time royal army was however, very small at the time. There was no standing army as such, just royal guards and garrisons, so with both sides arguing about the control of the part-time civilian military bodies and their stocks of weapons, the drift into armed conflict seemed inevitable. It would appear that the trained bands were in general pro-Parliament, so during early July 1642 in the face of this increasingly worrying situation, Parliament set up The Committee of Safety as a co-ordinating body to liaise between these various military institutions and its own members. This official body was fifteen strong with ten members of the House of Commons and five from the Lords. Hampden, Holles and Pym were among those chosen from the Commons whilst Essex with Saye & Sele were obvious choices to be included from the Lords.

In July 1642 the gulf between the king and Parliament had grown even wider and it was fuelled by increasing anger and frustration as Charles thwarted all moves towards reconciliation. Aware that the king was calling to him such men as he could trust and briefing them to ready themselves for armed service in his cause, on 12 July 1642 Parliament voted to raise an army of its own. As a member of the nobility, a leader of the opposition faction and possibly one of the most experienced military men in Parliament a parliamentary ordinance was passed naming Essex as,

> Captain-General and Chief Commander of the Army appointed to be raised, and of all other Forces of the Kingdom … and that he the said Earl shall have and enjoy all Power, Titles, Preheminence, Authority, Jurisdiction, and Liberties, incident and belonging to the said Office of Captain-General, throughout the whole Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales, in as large and ample a Manner as any other General of an Army in this Kingdom hath lawfully used exercised, and enjoyed.[13]

12 For a history of the English Militia see Scott, C. L., *The Maligned Militia* (Farnham, Ashgate, 2015).

13 The Parliament's Commission to the Earl of Essex to be Captain-General of their Army.' Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660 (1911), pp. 14-6. URL: http://www.

Not only did Parliament appoint him to be commander-in-chief of its army, but reaffirmed his titles as Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire and Yorkshire and added Herefordshire, Montgomeryshire and Shropshire to his list. [14]

There is a curious seeming anomaly in Essex's document of appointment as it charges him with 'preserving the Safety of His Majesty's Person'.[15] This was a deliberate attempt to mollify those who felt that raising an army to oppose the king was treason. They were content to struggle against Charles' rule with words in legal debate, but were hesitant to draw the sword and enter into what was construed as armed rebellion. By not actually stating that Essex was to lead forces against the king it carefully avoided advocating treasonous action and emphasised the argument that Parliament had taken up arms not against the monarch but against 'the cunning practice of Papists, and malicious Counsels of divers ill-affected Persons, inciting his Majesty to raise men'.[16] The fighting, if there were to be any, was to be against those who advised the king, not the king himself. They saw these 'evil councillors' as leading Charles astray and threatening the peace and security of the country, which, it was argued, was undoubtedly treason. Essex's commission is an interesting document as apart from its convoluted politics there is another telling point made, which meant that Essex did not have the free reign to do the job as he is likely to have wanted. It stated that he was to perform his duties 'in such Manner, and according to such Instructions, as he shall, from Time to Time, receive from both Houses of Parliament.'[17] This political and controlling manoeuvring in his commission is an indication of the difficult limitations and constraints placed upon him, and the deployment of the martial skills and independent thinking for which he was appointed. Both these points will be discussed further in the summary.

War became fact when Charles raised his royal standard at Nottingham on 22 August 1642 and sent out commissions of array to all parts of his realm for men to gather their forces and join him. He was declaring war upon the representatives of his people. Although he did not have the large turnout for which he was hoping, there were eventually sufficient men for him to form the nucleus of an army. By late August Parliament and Essex too had an army in London and the Home Counties. The London Trained Bands constituted a significant part of the whole force but it also included regiments initially raised for service in Ireland and those raised by the good and the great men of the opposition faction.

Shortly before Essex had received his commission, Parliament had already asked its supporters for loans of money, horses and equipment to which he personally contributed £1,000 and twenty horses. Then in mid-June, Parliament ordered,

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british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=55735

14 Cokayne, G.E. revised and much enlarged by White & Lea, *The Complete Peerage* (London, St. Catherine Press, 1959).

15 The Parliament's Commission to the Earl of Essex, op.cit .

16 *Ibid.*

17 *Ibid.*

> That the Horsemen that shall come to the Commissaries to Guildhall, to be inrolled, shall deliver Tickets where they lie, that they may be ready to be trained upon Warning; and that, so soon as Sixty Horses shall be enrolled, Notice shall be given, by the Commissaries to the Lord Admiral, the Earl of Essex, the Earl Pembroke, the Earl of Holland, and the Lord Viscount Say and Seale, Master of Court of Wards, and Liveries, or some of them, Officers may be appointed for the several Troops, to command, train, and exercise them.[18]

Initially these were independent troops, and it took a while to deploy them into permanent regiments. Essex had his own personal Life Guard of Horse as Lord General which consisted of 100 cuirassiers half of which were ranked as gentlemen, many drawn from students at the Inns of Court.

Among these young men was the future general Edmund Ludlow, who records in his memoirs that he and a number of friends were,

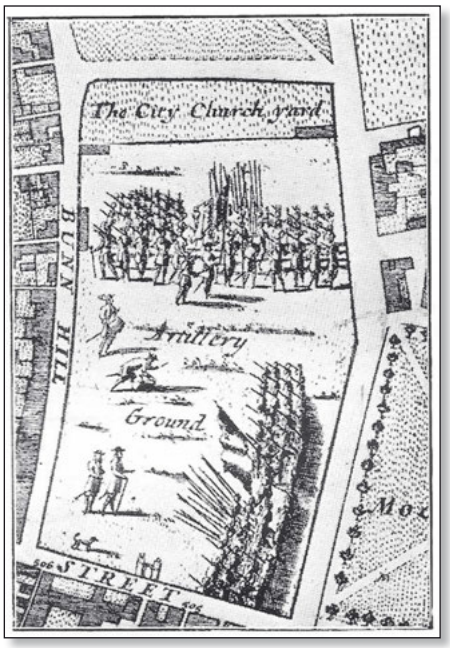
> … disposed to this service, in order to be instructed together in the use of arms, to render our selves fit and capable of acting in case there should be occasion to make use of us. To this end we procured a person experienced in military affairs to instruct us in the use of arms; and for some time we frequently met to exercise at the Artillery-Ground in London.'[19]

The Earl of Essex as Captain General, engraving by Hollar. (Turton Collection)

He goes on to say that upon hearing of the raising of the Lifeguard, 'most of our company entered themselves therein, and made up the greatest part of the said Guard'.[20] In addition, Essex also raised his own 'troop of carbines' under Captain Matthew Draper, which soon became the first troop in the Lord General's Regiment of Horse.

On 14 July, Parliament appointed William Russell, Earl of Bedford as Essex's General of Horse. Bedford was chosen for his personal standing not his experience, consequently Essex was very fortunate to secure Sir William Balfour for his Lieutenant General of Horse. Balfour had plenty of military experience having served as an officer with the Scots Brigade in the Dutch army fighting the Spanish. He had been knighted in 1605 and was a former Lieutenant Governor of the Tower of London, and although Scottish by birth,

18 Turton, A. *The Chief Strength of the Army* (Leigh-on-Sea, Partizan Press, undated), p. 3.
19 Edmund Ludlow, *Memoirs,* (Vivay, 1698), Volume 1, p. 43.
20 *Ibid.*.



The Artillery Gardens, engraving by Morden and Lea 1682. (Turton Collection)

took English nationality in May of 1642, causing an observer to write, 'for want of others, many Scotchmen are entertained to assist the commander of the Parliament forces'.[21]

Unlike the Horse, the Foot was raised by twenty or so influential men, most of whom sat in either the Lords or Commons, including Essex who was also issued with a colonel's commission. The twenty included the four who had already been recruiting for the Irish campaign. Each of them received levy money to raise their own regiments in the areas of the country where they held greatest personal influence. The Lord General's Regiment of Foot was mostly raised in London and the County of Essex, and its officers included a number of men with family connections to the earl. The volunteers for the London regiments registered at the New Artillery Ground and on 26 July it was reported that 10,000 of them paraded in Moorfields. On 6 August an order was made, 'that all the soldiers should have delivered unto them at their first marching, coats, shoes, shirts and caps in all to the value of 17/- for every man'.[22]

By the first two weeks of September, Essex, with most of the regiments having been formed, had left London, albeit some without their clothing issue. They were aware that the king was raising forces in the midlands and so set out north-west from London. On 23 September, an order was issued that all regiments of Foot and troops of Horse remaining in the City were to march within 48 hours to join the Earl of Essex. Regiments over 400 strong should march away as they were, whilst smaller regiments would be cashiered. Parliament's first army was now in the field.

However, Essex soon encountered difficulties with the level of support he received from those who had ordered the raising of his army. Many of the once-keen supporters of reform were loath to go into rebellion despite all the arguments. They feared that as the king was the king, he naturally would return to power after the war was over, and that they would become answerable for any action they took during the conflict. There were several groups of Members of Parliament not prepared to either give Essex their full backing, or support their army and the stated intention to defeat the royal forces in battle and force reform upon the king. One group of them formed what became known as 'the peace party' – men who saw the way forward as negotiating a settlement with the king, albeit from the position of strength of having an army at its back. Amongst those who supported Essex and his army, but taking a more openly confrontational line were 'the war party'. They wanted to force the king to meet their army in battle, defeat it and having achieved dominance, to impose their conditions on a beaten monarch. Essex's friend Pym tried to mediate between the two elements. Although not a member of the peace party, it is believed that Essex shared the hopes that a compromise could be reached and this is often cited as a reason for his unwillingness to prosecute the war to best of his abilities.

21 *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series, Charles I. 1642,* (London, 1688), p. 367.
22 *Ibid*, p. 366.

With two opposing armies in being, bloodshed was inevitable and from having been a boyhood friend of James I's eldest son Henry, to becoming captain general of Parliament's army, Robert Devereux was set to take the field against the royalist captain general, James I's youngest son Charles Stuart.

3

The Edgehill Campaign, Autumn 1642

By raising his standard against his Parliament, King Charles I effectively declared a state of civil war and although not easily done, both sides managed to gather armies for the struggle. The early moves in the conflict were outlined in the previous chapter, but having chosen Nottingham for his base, the king soon discovered that the midlands were not enthusiastic for his cause. Men did however come in slowly. To stem a gradual royalist build-up and to profit from their own cause's popularity in the midland counties Parliament ordered Essex to march with his newly-raised and essentially-southern army to Northampton in order to seek more recruits from that part of the country.

The king had hoped to march south so as to go to the aid of Goring in Portsmouth who, having purported to support Parliament, had turned his coat and declared for the royal cause. He was soon besieged by experienced soldiers, Sir William Waller and Sir John Meldrum. Once in the south, Charles believed his presence would act as a magnet for reinforcements from both the southern counties and the West Country, but on 7 September, Goring and his desertion-depleted garrison surrendered, thus releasing Waller and Meldrum to rejoin Essex's army gathering in Northamptonshire. The earl himself arrived in Northampton on 10 September and showed once again he was adept at rallying men, recruiting significant numbers of local volunteers to augment his regiments, so that he soon had a combined force of around 20,000. As a consequence, the king changed his plans.

Realising the threat posed by this large parliamentarian army and taking a degree of alarm, the king and his council abandoned Nottingham and marched westward with their little army, via Derby to Shrewsbury, which they reached on 20 September.[1] Charles had been informed that the Severn-side town was well-affected to his cause, and he was not to be disappointed, for on the day of his arrival, he was joined by three regiments of Foot: Rivers', Fitton's and Aston's, the majority of their men raised in the Marches and northwest Midlands.

1 A party also went to Chester to recruit in the northern Marches.

Through his spy network Essex had learned of this increase to the royal army, so moved to make the king's task of attracting men more difficult by establishing a presence in the Marches. This was designed to have a twofold effect: to put pressure on potential royal recruits to think twice about joining the king; and to encourage adherents to Parliament and waverers to enlist under him. On 19 September, to cement this presence and shadow the king's movements, Essex marched from Northampton towards Worcester which was fast threatening to become a royal stronghold.

On the same day Worcester was occupied by a small party of royalists. Sir John Byron and 150 dragoons arrived from Oxford accompanying a convoy of plate intended for the king's treasure chest. Tempted by the potential prize, Essex sent Colonel John Brown with about 1,000 Horse and dragoons in advance of the army in the hope of intercepting Byron's convoy, but they were too late. Brown reached Worcester in the early hours of 22 September but could not gain entry because of the already-manned eastern defences so he withdrew southwards along the east bank of the Severn. He then turned west and crossed to the west bank at Upton and retraced his steps northwards towards the southern part of the city which was reputedly not so well defended, intending to get over the Teme at Powick Bridge.[2] However, the city's weaker western defences were not Brown's objective. Apparently he thought that the approach of Essex and his whole army would induce Byron to run away and escape before it arrived, in which belief he was encouraged by some intelligence from local people that the royalists intended to leave Worcester the next day via the west gate, planning to turn north and follow the west bank of the river to Shrewsbury. Consequently Brown had his force spend the night south of the Teme meaning to cross over the next day and advance up the Severn hoping to surprise Byron shortly after he left the city.

On 23 September Brown's spies confirmed that Byron was preparing to leave late that afternoon, so he ordered his dragoons to use the morning to prepare, and in the early afternoon to advance to the bridge at Powick. His plan was that covered by these dragoons, Colonel Sandys' Regiment of Horse would cross the bridge and occupy both the lane which led to it and Wick Field to the east, so as to protect the crossing of the whole force. Once across the Teme, Brown would then advance on Byron, intercept him and relieve him of his treasure.

However back in Shrewsbury, when the king heard that Byron was at Worcester and that he had a valuable convoy with him, he immediately dispatched his nephew, Prince Rupert of the Rhine, with a considerable force of cavalry and dragoons, to see if they could aid his endeavours. Upon arrival, Rupert judged Worcester to be indefensible and once he had rested his men and horses, decided upon evacuation. Some of his troopers were sent south to rest in the fields around Powick and to watch the southern approaches to the city. They were accompanied by dragoons to cover any attempt by the enemy to cross Powick Bridge. The force arrived in those fields around midday and the troopers unsaddled and took off their armour whilst the dragoons dismounted and took up positions in the surrounding hedges within small arms range of the bridge.

2 The Teme is a fairly substantial tributary of the Severn which it joins just east of Powick.

In the early afternoon Sandys' troopers began their ordered crossing of Powick Bridge, and the royalist dragoons opened fire upon them. The firing must have been a shock to many of the royalist cavalrymen now recumbent on the grass. Also surprised by being shot at, Sandys' troopers launched themselves forward in a disordered dash to drive the impudent dragoons from their hedges and secure Wick Field immediately to the east of the lane. They had some success, but when they got into the field they literally bumped into Rupert's men as they rapidly re-saddled and tried to get into some sort of order. Rupert himself arrived, ostensibly to oversee the rest and recuperation but responded quickly to the situation and organised the royalist riposte to the unexpected engagement. He led a cavalry charge into the disorganised parliamentarians and a bloody melée ensured. Sandys was killed, many of his men seriously wounded and the regiment thrown into total confusion. They streamed out of the field, back down the lane and over the bridge, closely followed by the royalists hacking at their backs.

Fortunately Brown's positioning of his own dragoons prevented the complete destruction of Sandys' Regiment and their fire halted Rupert's pursuit before they too thought better of their exposed position and mounted up and rode off. In their panic Sandys' men swept Brown's remaining force away and they all kept running, re-crossing the Severn at Upton before continuing their rout to Pershore. In Pershore their panicked flight caused them to disorder their supports. They supposedly crashed through the cuirassiers of Essex's Lifeguard, who were also heading for Worcester up the same road. Fear communicated to these men too, although Rupert was no longer pursuing. These supports joined the flight of Brown's troops back to the safety of the whole army. Rupert did not have sufficient numbers or arms to risk a general engagement with an army, so believing it too great a risk to remain in what he considered an open city, the royalists abandoned Worcester, and took Byron's plate with them to Shrewsbury.

This opening combat resulted in considerable loss of face and self-confidence among the whole of Essex's Horse and laid the foundation for the fearsome reputation of Rupert's cavalry. Although well-matched in numbers, this royalist victory had repercussions out of all proportion to the actual event. This first skirmish of the war at Powick Bridge on 23 September 1642 lasted for about 15 minutes, but the exaggerated and florid horror stories that circulated after the incident were rapidly disseminated through both armies and found fertile soil in the soldiers' impressionable minds. For example, one parliamentarian author stated

> That many of their soldiers and Cavaliers, being fled into Worcester before the end of the skirmish, were seen in the streets most woefully cut and mangled, some having their ears cut off, some the flesh of their heads sliced off, some with their very skulls hanging down, and they ready to fall down dead, their pistols and carbines being hewed and hacked away in slices, which it seems they held up for guard of their heads.[3]

3 J. Vicars, *Jehovah Jireh, God in the Mount* (1644), p.166.

In similar vein, the letters of Nehemiah Wharton, a London volunteer sergeant in Colonel Denzil Holles' regiment of parliamentarian Foot, provide a colourful summary of his experiences during the first few months of the war and reflect the contemporary prevalence of exaggeration, rumour and speculation

> Our wounded men they brought into the city, and stripped, robbed, and slashed their dead bodies in a most barbarous manner, and imbued their hands in their blood. This relation I had from an gentleman that was in the front of the battle, and was wounded with the sword and bullets in seven several places, was stripped naked, and yet liveth. He afterwards thought that there were ten for one, yet there were more slain and wounded of them than of us and I spoke with one that heard the Prince, at his return, say, that our men fought more like lions then men … Since their departure we hear that the Prince [Rupert] is wounded, but it is certain Duke [Prince] Maurice is mortally wounded. They report unto the king that they have slain eight hundred of our men, when there were but twenty-eight slain in all, and some of them were Cavaliers.[4]

In reality, casualties at Powick Bridge were very light, although several senior royalist officers were hurt leading their men: Prince Maurice received two cuts on the head, Lord Wilmot was cut on the arm, Sir Lewes Dives was wounded and the son of Sir John Strangeways taken prisoner. Total losses on the parliamentarian side were heavier but no more than fifty including Colonels Sandys and Brown who were mortally wounded.[5] Major Douglas was killed, and about ten junior officers were taken prisoner including Captain Wingate, who was quickly exchanged for the young Strangeways. Nevertheless, the widespread, over-blown and sensationalised descriptions and images that circulated freely exerted a considerable and lasting influence upon the troops' morale, attitudes and subsequent folk-lore.

Essex was quick to understand that he needed to address his army in order to counter the effects of the growing tales of invincibility of the royal cavalry. The next day he did so, endeavouring to put heart into his troops after this initial poor showing. Afterwards on 24 September he duly entered the now-abandoned Worcester and immediately set Lieutenant General of Ordnance, Du-Bois to fortifying the city for Parliament. However, there was a degree of ill-discipline which Essex had to curb. Some troops, feeling justified in that they had taken an enemy town, began looting and this included the cathedral. However, even if burdened by local troubles, Essex did not neglect the wider military picture. He sent a detachment under Lord Stamford to secure Hereford and forward outposts were set up at Bewdley and Kidderminster. Satisfied with these dispositions, Essex awaited the expected royalist counter-attack to recover Worcester. It never came; Charles

4 Nehemiah Wharton's letters provide considerable insight into the military life and experiences of the times. They commence on 16 August 1642 and end at Worcester on 7 October 1642. S. Peachey, *The Edgehill Campaign & the Letters of Nehemiah Wharton* (Leigh on Sea, Partizan Press, 1989), p. 18.

5 Atkin, M., *The Civil War in Worcestershire* (Stroud, Sutton, 1995), p.39.

was more interested in building up his army than risking losses in an assault upon a fortified city.

In the Marcher counties the king found that his popularity was greater than in the central and east midlands and that he could also draw upon recruits and supplies from Wales. Moreover his excellent Lieutenant General of Ordnance, Sir John Heydon had managed to assemble from various sources a small but effective train of artillery. During late September and early October Charles himself temporarily left Shrewsbury to take part in a successful recruiting drive through the Welsh Marches and at Chester before returning and busying himself in the modelling of his new army. With their preparations made, the king and his council debated their next move and came to the conclusion that a rapid advance on London could end the war at a stroke, and if Essex interposed his army, then so be it – they would give him battle. As a cover to gain time on the march, Rupert's cavalry sought to give the image of the expected counter attack and demonstrated towards Worcester, causing a parliamentarian garrison at Kidderminster to fall back on the main army convinced that the king's main force was following them.

Instead, having mostly completed the build-up of his army early in the month, the king marched out of Shrewsbury on 12 October and headed southeast, appearing to threaten Essex's communications with London. Clarendon noted that it was considered better to obviously march towards London, as they were sure that Essex would put himself in their way. Both sides knew that a battle was coming and both sought it but the royalists preferred such an engagement should take place where their cavalry would have greater influence. Consequently their southeast direction took them into more open countryside whereas an advance towards Worcester from Shrewsbury meant that any fight would have to take place in the enclosed terrain of the Severn Valley. Charles in fact having led his army out via his outpost at Bridgnorth, marched by stages to Wolverhampton, reaching Birmingham on 17 October. On 18 October they regrouped at Meriden Heath then marched to the area around Kenilworth.

Essex meanwhile had left Worcester, trying once again to shadow the king but as scouting was very much an as-yet-unacquired skill, neither side knew exactly where their enemy was. Essex left the regiments of St John, Stamford and Merrick to cover Worcester but his progress was comparatively slow. Clarendon states that for Essex 'his train was so very great, that he could move but in slow marches'.[6] His army marched on a broad front that funnelled them across the Avon at the two bridges of Evesham and Stratford, a dangerous thing to do when he had no idea where his enemy actually was. Equally the king, lacking any intelligence of the route of Essex's march, decided surprisingly to divert from his plan of a quick descent on London and to pause and take Banbury. As his forces took a wide berth of Lord Brooke's powerful castle at Warwick, some of his baggage fell into the hands of a patrol from its garrison, and his plans for Banbury were discovered and carried to Essex.

6 Edward, Earl of Clarendon, *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (Oxford,University Press, 1843), p. 306.

Clarendon claims the royalist army travelled light, 'there being not one Tent, and very few Wagons belonging to the whole Train'.[7] The problems that both armies probably experienced can be appreciated when it is realised that Charles' Ordnance Office estimated that a minimum of eight carts were required for artillery projectiles, twelve for powder, twenty two for shot and five for match – that is thirty five vehicles needed for ammunition alone, before taking any other train stores or equipment into account. Despite what Clarendon claims, the king's train was heavy and cumbersome but Essex's was even larger and heavier.

The king moved towards Banbury where Parliament maintained a garrison in its castle, but the home and estates of the staunchly royalist Earl of Northampton were also close by. The royal army spent the night in Edgecote and its surrounding hamlets, whilst Essex marched into Warwick. Hearing of the exact location of the king from messengers from the Banbury garrison who arrived asking for help, Essex ordered his men to set out straight away for Kineton so as to threaten the enemy and draw their attention away from an easy victory at Banbury. However, not all Essex's army had come up, in fact it had become somewhat dispersed by sending out recruiting parties, strengthening garrisons and taking smaller places thought to be of significant value. Despite not being at full strength Essex had them march towards the enemy.

Aware that his army ought to make a decisive move before Essex's arrival, on 20 October Charles had ordered a muster at Southam, a small town that had witnessed a sharp local skirmish earlier in the campaign when both armies were marching west. Here his footsore soldiers were given a brief rest. The next night, 21 October, they were billeted in villages around the Wormington Hills and whilst the rest of the army took a rest day, the king and his officers made detailed plans for the assault on Banbury the next day, with Sir Nicholas Byron's brigade assigned to the task. A scouting party of four hundred horsemen was also sent out and had searched in vain the whole of that day to find any sign of Essex's forces. This was all to change dramatically, but meanwhile the royal troops settled down for the night wherever they could find shelter.

The overnight billets were sought out by troop and regimental quartermasters, who rode out well in advance of the army, and allocated who should be accommodated where. It was one of Essex's quartermasters' parties entering Wormleighton on 21 October that fell in with a group of Rupert's men also looking for billets and, being surprised, the parliamentarians were all taken. This was the first indication to either side of just how close the armies were to each other. Rupert immediately sent out another small scouting party of twenty-four men to determine whether Essex was at Kineton.

Essex had indeed chosen the market town of Kineton as a rendezvous point for the regrouping of his army and gave orders to quarter there for the night of 22 October. The army was still marching gradually eastward in a number of disparate groups along several different roads. A section of Essex's train of artillery was so far behind that Hampden's and Grantham's regiments

7 *Ibid*, p. 307.

of Foot were forced to march with them as guards. Once the junction of a major portion of his forces had been made, Essex planned to march on the thirteen miles from Kineton to Banbury to prevent the king's designs on that place. However before the parliamentarian army arrived at this rendezvous, their billeting officers rode into Kineton, only to discover, like those at Wormleighton, that their royalist counterparts there too. Fighting broke out and although this time the parliamentarians were triumphant it seems some royal troopers somehow managed to discover just how large a force was on its way.

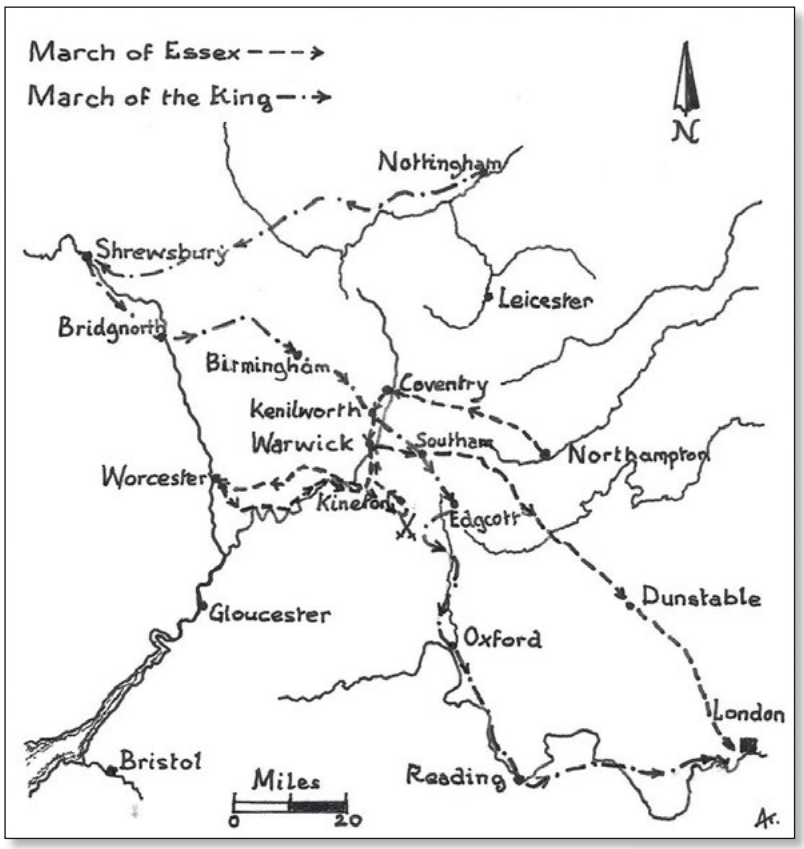
Kineton itself was quite a small town with its parish church standing at the junction of four roads near its centre, whilst on the south side of the town the little river Dene flowed in a deep gully. Essex's infantry would have been allotted billets in the town and immediately outside in the surrounding fields. A main court of guard was probably set up somewhere near the church and lookouts established in its tower. It was also likely that the baggage train, and that part of the artillery that had kept up with the main body of the army, was parked somewhere near the river to enable the watering of the hundreds of draught animals; the carters sleeping in or under their wagons.[8] There would have been no room for the majority of the cavalry to quarter within the town, so, as was normal practice, they were dispersed to neighbouring villages for miles around. However, as the men settled down for the night in Kineton and the surrounding fields and hamlets, they knew nothing of the men who had escaped the skirmish between the two billeting parties and had taken the news of Essex's probable whereabouts to the king.

Although not certain, both commanders had a good idea that their armies had come into very close proximity and plans for further strategic moves appear to have been abandoned by both sides. Consequently on 23 October the royal council ordered a muster on Edgehill, part of the long escarpment that dominated the Vale of the Red Horse. Upon receipt of these orders, the royalist troops began to leave their quarters and pick their way through the dark country lanes up to the rendezvous. They mustered upon the narrow plateau between the steep northern escarpment of Edgehill and the little village of Ratley. Rupert arrived at daybreak but it would be past midday before the rear of the army came up with the train of artillery.

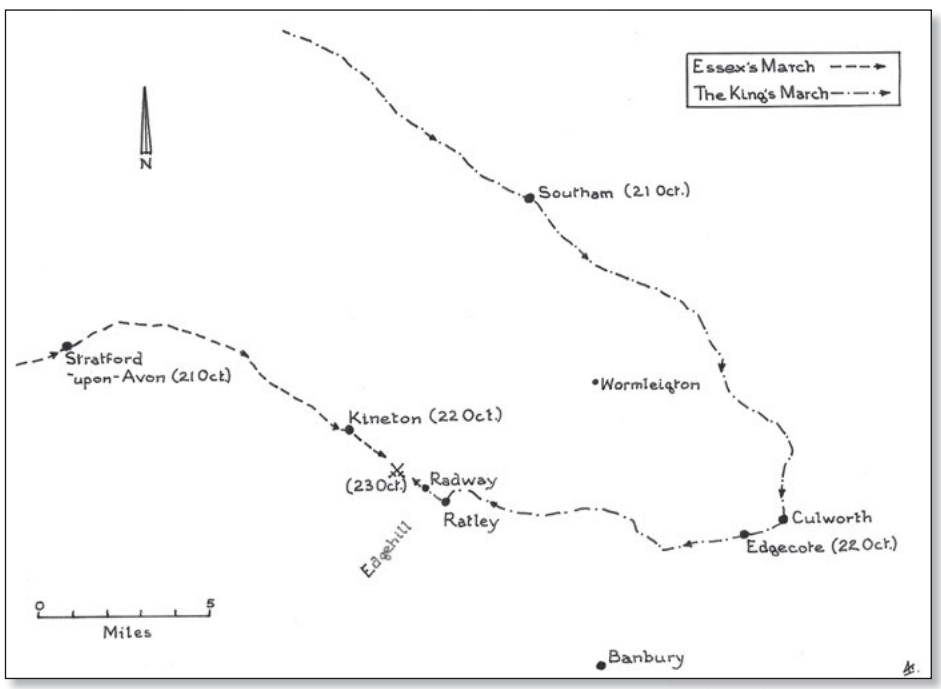
Meanwhile down in the valley, the parliamentarian army was beginning to stir, the troops looking forward to a quiet Sabbath day rest. Cavalry pickets would have been sent out at daybreak to expand the tight overnight security perimeter of the camp and to take in any high vantage points. It was probably such a picket sent to occupy Edgehill that first became aware of the royalist presence upon it and reported back to the officer of the watch. The Reverend Adoniram Bifield claimed to have made the first visual confirmation sighting of the royalists, 'by help of a prospective Glasse'.[9] The news of the royalists' appearance reached Essex at about 8 a.m. as he and his senior officers were making their way to church for Sunday service. The alarm would have

8 This has been partially substantiated by the discovery of several items of everyday camp life in the area. Pollard, T., & Oliver, N., *Two Men in a Trench II* (London: Penguin, 2003).

9 TT. E. 126 (38): Bifield, Rev. A., *A Letter sent by a Worthy Divine to the Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of London, being a true Relation of the battaile* (London, 1642).



The Edgehill Campaign. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)



The Arrival at Edgehill. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

William Russell, Earl of Bedford, commander of Essex's Reserve of Horse at Edgehill, engraving by J. Houbraken. (Turton Collection)

sounded through the town, and Essex ordered in his cavalry from their scattered overnight stations and no doubt, sent urgent messages to Hampden's distant detachment with the rest of the train to hurry to the rendezvous.

Essex now had to make the decision whether to stand and fight where he was, to fall back to join Hampden and Grantham, or to advance and attack. The two armies were of a roughly equal size, some 14,000 strong, but pressure on Essex at this point was enormous, the whole weight of Parliament's 'Good Old Cause' rested upon his shoulders, for if he failed in the coming fight, that cause would be utterly lost. Critics of Essex have frequently attacked him for being lethargic and indecisive, but that morning he displayed neither of those traits. He decided to take the fight to the king, but not on the ground the monarch had chosen.

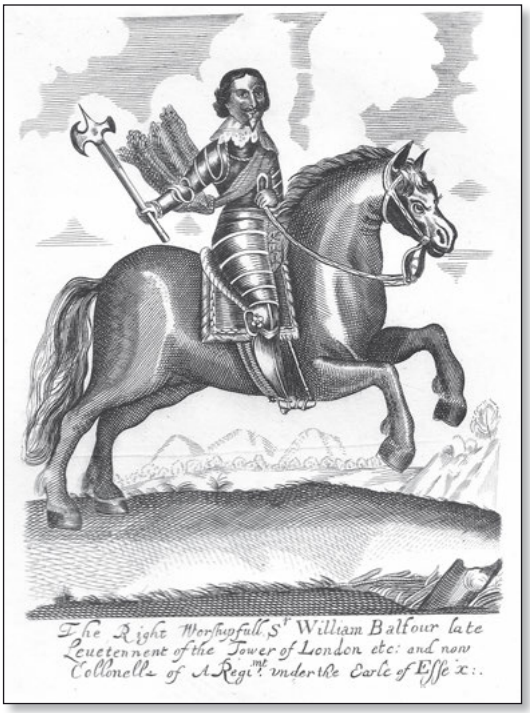
Essex had no intention of attacking the royal army whilst it was positioned atop the steep rise of the Edgehill escarpment but he did draw his army out of Kineton to the east and onto a small ridge facing the village of Radway. It is generally held that he deployed his army along this rise with Horse on both flanks and Foot in the centre, some of it being protected by a thick hedge and then allowed the royalists time to not only move down off their superior heights but to also draw up in a similar formation opposite him.[10]

The battle began with a cannonade from the king's large guns which appears to have startled Rupert's cavalry on the royal right and launched them into an all-out charge. Wilmot's left wing of Horse followed suit, and both forces engaged their opposite numbers in the parliamentarian army who fought briefly then fled, taking several infantry regiments with them. Rupert and Wilmot's men pursued the fleeing men and left the field, leaving the infantry of both sides to continue the action. After some dogged and bitter fighting, with the line swaying first one way and then the other, Essex's men gradually gained the upper hand, and aided by their reserve of Horse, swung forward pivoting on their left and driving the royalists back to a defensive position on a ditch. By then however, the light was fading fast and the victorious royal Horse returned too late to perform anything significant to influence the outcome of the battle. The fighting ground to a halt and during the night the king's men retired back up Edgehill leaving the field in Essex's hands.

10 After much consideration we feel those authorities who support the reorientation of the battlefield through more than 45 degrees for the deployment and opening engagements are unjustified in doing so without explaining the inherent contradiction to the written sources. To place the royalist right wing in a position to charge directly without having to deal with hedgerows because horses do not like jumping, may make initial battlefield sense, but it takes no notice of Sir Bernard Stuart, who was in command of the King's Lifeguard, and states in his memoir that he was obliged to jump five hedges during his charge and he had no reason to lie.

As stated in the preface it is not the intention of this work to undertake the detailed description and analysis of battles, we leave that to specialised books with more pages to devote to maps, eye-witness accounts and lists covering officers, units, battle orders etc. However as also promised, we recommend that readers interested in the story of the Battle of Edgehill consult one or more of the following volumes or articles.

- Davies, G., 'The Battle of Edgehill', *English Historical Review* (Oxford, 1921), XXXVI.
- Miller, Rev. G., 'The Battle of Edgehill', *Journal of the Royal Archaeological Institute*, 46, (1889).
- Roberts, K., & Tincey, J. *Edgehill 1642, First Battle of the English Civil War* (Botley, Osprey Publishing, 2001).
- Scott, C.L., Turton, A & Gruber von Arni, E. *Edgehill, the Battle Re-interpreted* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2004).
- Walford, E.A., *Edgehill:The Battle and Battlefield* (London, 1904).
- Young, P., *Edgehill, 1642, The Campaign and the Battle* (Kineton, Roundway Press, 1967).


The Right Worshipfull S^r William Balfour late
Leuetennent of the Tower of London etc: and now
Colloneller of A Regi^t: under ye Earle of Esse x:.

Sir William Balfour, commander of Essex's Right Wing of Horse at Edgehill, from an old engraving. (Turton Collection)

In secondary sources, much has been made of the poor battlefield morale of Essex's army and how so many units, once contacted then broke and fled. This is understandable in an untried force and even more so by considering the damage done to the fighting spirit of the Horse by events at Powick Bridge and the sight of the wounded who escaped from that engagement. However a redeeming feature of the battle pertaining to the discipline of the parliamentarian army was the way in which units continued to come up and join the fight even when they must have been passed on the road by men fleeing the field. The routers did cause some of their number to run, but not the majority. These reinforcing units included troops of Horse under Captain Edward Kightley, and a troop of the Lord General's Horse under Captain Oliver Cromwell. One cannot but also admire much of Essex's infantry for, at the end of the fray, having fought all afternoon and by then mostly out of shot they reformed their bodies and once again marched forward to attack. The whole day seems to have been one of attack, melee, fall-back, regroup and attack again, alternating musket and pike fighting as appropriate. It must have been especially hard for Ballard's brigade which appears to have made three separate advances to contact. The end of the fight came almost by mutual consent. Both sides ran out of energy and the will to fight as the day ran out of light, 'by this time it grew so dark and our Powder and Bullet so spent that it was not held fit we should Advance upon them'.[11]

Under the cover of this early nightfall Essex's army bedded down on the ground they had so magnificently won. Many of the royalists also remained

11 Official Parliamentary Account.

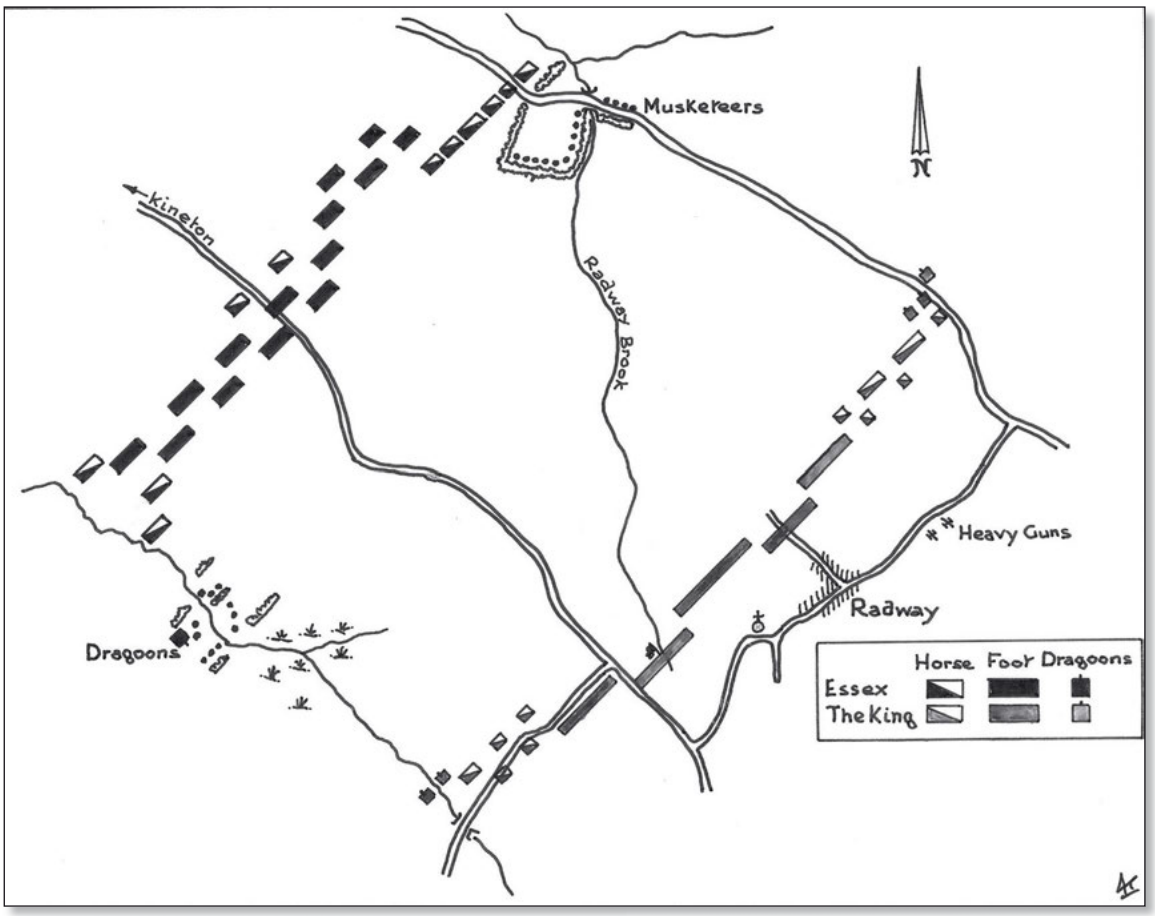
The Battlefield of Edgehill from the air. (Photo Richard Ellis)

in the field, while others regained the high ground of Edgehill. The king's infantry was ordered back up the slope covered by those elements of Rupert's exhausted cavalry which had returned. Sir Philip Warwick of the King's Lifeguard of Horse styles the battle, 'our first and great military misadventure' and places the blame for the defeat upon Byron and Digby, 'for both reserves pursuing the chase, contrary to all discipline of war, left the King and his Foot so alone, that it gave Essex a title unto the victory that day'.[12]

That night Essex's army stood their guard on the ground they had gained, thus technically being able to claim Edgehill fight as a parliamentarian victory, but the night of 23 October was bitterly cold; the wind dropped and frost formed on the bodies of the dead, dying and wounded alike. Conditions in the parliamentarian lines were unpleasant in the extreme. Few fires were lit, the ground they stood upon was littered with corpses, and many men had not eaten in two days. Ludlow describes how having lost his cloak and, 'having nothing to keep me warm but a suit of iron, I was obliged to walk around all night, which proved very cold by reason of a sharp frost'.[13] The cold did however save many lives as it inhibited the flow of blood from open wounds.

In the early hours, John Hampden's weary brigade came into the lines, having spent part of the night in Kineton, but dawn revealed that the royalists were in no position to renew the action that morning. To the relief of his men, Essex pulled them all back into Kineton for a few hours rest before again arraying them in the field from mid morning to early afternoon. Rochford's Regiment also arrived and marched onto the field where they prevented the royalists from carrying off all their abandoned guns. Other units of Essex's army came onto the battlefield and appeared to draw up to resume the battle of the previous day. This was forestalled by the king who sent a herald to Essex, offering a pardon and terms for agreed cessation to the war. However this herald was roughly handled by Essex's men and sent packing without making his terms known. Essex's army then spent the day on the battlefield, burying the dead, treating the wounded, gathering weapons or anything useful and seeking information about missing friends. Meanwhile the royal Foot rested and regrouped on their hilltop, and their

12 Sir Phillip Warwick, *Memoirs of the Reign of King Charles I* (Edinburgh, Ballantine, 1813).
13 Ludlow, op cit, pp. 44-5.



The Battle of Edgehill. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

lack of activity convinced Essex that the engagement was definitely over, so he again pulled back his forces to Kineton in order to prepare to retire to Warwick; some units began their withdrawal that evening.

That night the little town was packed with sick and wounded, but at least the local country people were bringing in some provisions. Essex himself rode that evening to Warwick whilst every wagon that still had a team was readied for an early morning start. On the morning of 25 October the preparations for Essex's withdrawal had not gone unnoticed by the royalists and Rupert argued for an attack upon their rear, and indeed tried to launch one by marching down from the hill at a spot called Sun-Rising with two regiments of Horse and two of dragoons. He was too late. By the time Rupert arrived in Kineton, most of the rebel army were already on the road, helped enormously by a great mist that concealed them and hindered a pursuit. The royalists had to content themselves with a skirmish and the capture of a number of arms and ammunition wagons plus Essex's own transports containing his plate and cabinet of private letters. This skirmish marked the end of the Battle of Edgehill, the first and longest of the great field actions of the English Civil War.

Before turning to campaign events post-Edgehill it is necessary to summarise the performance of both Essex and his army and to say a little about the earl's care for his wounded. The leading expert in this field is Dr

Eric Gruber von Arni and we strongly recommend readers to consult Gruber von Arni, E.E., *Justice to the Maimed Soldier* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

Dr. Gruber gave permission for us to use and freely quote his work for this section of our chapter.

> Essex's care for his men extended far beyond that of the general level of interest of senior officers of the period. Not only did he see to it that the wounded were sought out and attended to but he also set up hospitals nearby for their care. He appears to have led an awakening to the idea that Parliament faced a consuming national conflict, and he paved the way towards constructing a definitive health and welfare service for those injured in service. Casualty estimates for Edgehill have ranged across widely disparate figures that have, more often than not, been grossly exaggerated or understated according to the persuasion of the author. A combined total of up to 5,000 dead was widely reported by several contemporary writers but as this would mean about 20% of those engaged such a number is more likely to have embraced both killed and wounded and then may still be incorrect.

The use of local communities to care for sick and wounded soldiers was dependent to a great extent on local sympathies. On 29 October 1642, the Eydon parish register recorded that 'a soldier of the King's Army and wounded in the battle of Edge-Hill was buried with us' but the predominantly parliamentarian sympathisers of the surrounding villages were generally hostile to the royalist cause and gave scant care to casualties left behind by the king's army.[14] However, many of Essex's wounded were carried by, or struggled to follow, the retiring army towards Warwick, whilst others were taken in by local people. Up to 200 wounded men lay in Kineton where, according to Ludlow, 'the enemy having notice, sent out a party of Horse under Prince Rupert, who on Tuesday night fell into the town of Kineton, where our sick and wounded soldiers lay, and after they had cruelly murdered many of them, returned to their army'.[15] Other wounded soldiers tried to struggle to their own homes, some at a considerable distance, whilst the most severe cases were carried to Warwick and Coventry in recently captured enemy carts requisitioned for 'the relief of maimed soldiers which were to the number of three or four hundred sent to Warwick to be cared for and cured of their wounds'.[16]

When Essex finally returned to London on 7 November he took the 'walking wounded' with him. Many, together with the casualties that arose from Rupert's subsequent attack on Brentford on 12 November as will

14 Underdown, D., 'The Problem of Popular Allegiance in the English Civil War', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, XXXI (1981), pp. 69-94; Underdown, D., 'The Chalk and The Cheese: Contrast Amongst the English Clubmen', *Past and Present*, LXXXV (1979), pp. 25-48.

15 Howell, H.A.L., The Army Surgeon, and the care of the sick & wounded during the Great Civil War, *Journal of the RAMC* (1904), VI, p.301; Ludlow, *op. cit*., I, p. 45.

16 N.A., SP28/253B, *C.S.P.D.*,op.cit., p. 693; *C.S.P.D. Add.,* p.345; *JHC*, III, p.187; C.H.Firth, *Cromwell's Army* (1902), p.260; Kempthorne, G.A.,, 'Notes on the medical services during the Civil War and the Interegnum 1642 – 1660,' *Journal of the RAMC,* LXXXVII (1941), pp.192-202.

be described below, found lodgings wherever they could in houses and villages scattered throughout the western suburbs of London as well as in the City itself. On 13 November, Parliament issued instructions for soldiers requiring medical care to report to the Savoy Hospital for treatment and, on 3 December, ordered the establishment of a daily 'sick parade' at the Savoy, where wounded soldiers carrying a certificate from their officer 'shall with their said certificates, repose to the Savoy Hospital where there shall be a physician and surgeon appointed ready every morning between 8 and 9 o'clock to view their wounds and maims and to dress the same'. The physician's and surgeon's fees were paid by Parliament whilst additional administrative officials were instructed to pay each soldier who was sufficiently fit to remain in lodgings the sum of 8d a day until their wounds were healed.[17] Meanwhile the care and subsistence of those not able to be moved immediately and housed in Warwick, Stratford-upon-Avon or Coventry was also paid for by funds from Parliament's Committee for Sick and Maimed Soldiers.[18]

Payments were also made to enable soldiers to return to the army. Many of the wounded were assisted financially to return to their homes, either to recover or to die. At the root of such care of Essex's wounded was an appreciation that the recruitment of fresh soldiers was difficult and, in order to conserve manpower, general officers had to ensure those wounded in their service were looked after and returned to their regiments when possible.

After Edgehill, Essex's army appears to have rested for a few days in the Warwick area. It was obliged to requisition supplies and other necessaries as well as appropriate what it needed from local people. One of the aspects of the passage of an army was its voracious appetite for firewood, and thus private log piles, gates, old furniture, dilapidated barns as well as woodlands and even orchards were often 'fair game'. Soldiers of most armies also caused disturbances wherever they went, especially during war, when 'living off the land' or 'requisition and quartering' often became a necessity. Essex's army was no exception, and although there are no accusations of atrocities, he afforded a degree of licence to his men, who frequently overstepped the boundaries of the law. There was nothing systematic about what we today call a commissariat. Provisions were acquired and supplied by contractors and by various military methods but feeding an army was always a problem. Both their general and the parliamentarian army were fortunate in that many of the people through whose counties they marched were sympathetic to their cause and supplied not only provisions but information as well. Whereas we have no record of any sympathetic ear in the royal camp, Parliament did offer to pay for the expenses or damages incurred by the local populace during their army's occupation of the region. There is no way of telling if the claims submitted were all accurate, unexaggerated or even true, but they do give a reasonable picture of the variety of implications of having Essex's men pass through a community and fight a major engagement.

17 *Journal of the House of Commons*, II, p. 874.

18 For detailed lists of names and regiments of the wounded at Edgehill see. Scott, C.L., Turton, A & Gruber von Arni, E. *Edgehill, the Battle Re-interpreted* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2004).

The campaign that resulted in the Battle of Edgehill on 23 October 1642 was not professionally planned or executed by Essex or his army. Lord General Essex, although an experienced staff officer, had never held overall command before and was learning his trade. As indeed was his army, particularly in its reconnaissance and scouting duties, which were so rudimentary that the general was often obliged to make decisions in the dark and the army often marched blind. At times the information he did receive led him to draw the wrong conclusions. Rupert misled him on 10 October by taking a small force out of Shrewsbury to Stourbridge thus giving the impression the royal army was moving back to Worcester whereas the king was marching southeast and reached Kenilworth before Essex realised he had been duped. Despite this failing the army was able to manoeuvre satisfactorily against the king who was also labouring under the same difficulties.

Military communications were dependent upon couriers and they could always get lost or even be killed or captured. Essex appears to have done his best to keep the senior officers of his army aware of his strategic intentions and to coordinate their movements, but it is too easy in these days of radio, mobile phone and even skype communications to criticise his failures to do so perfectly. His army did get strung out on its final march and some units were late in arriving at Kineton, and with better planning and a more efficient order system the command and control of the army on campaign could have been better organised, but then hindsight is a marvellous thing. Essex is also criticised for not exerting command and control during the battle. He is known to have prepared his order of battle well beforehand and made his field deployment during the morning, then dismounted and, taking his half-pike in hand, placed himself in the front rank of his own regiment of Foot. Being in the forefront of the action was very brave, but he was in no position to respond to any crisis or to issue orders to any other part of his army other than those companies in his immediate vicinity. For a commander to do this may appear foolish today, but, in his defence, this was the way things were done at that time; generals fought with their men, often leading by example.

When it came to fighting, Essex's men in general were better equipped than their royalist counterparts who had serious shortages in weaponry. The parliamentarian musketeers in particular mostly had swords and other accoutrements such as bandoleers, whilst many of their pikemen had been issued with armour.[19] The Horse appears to have been equally matched to the king's cavalry in equipment, indeed they possibly had far more firearms, but Essex's men complained of inferior horseflesh and in general they lacked comparable skill in horsemanship. Essex's artillery also seems to have been comparable in number to those of the king's army but seem to have not had the ability to maintain the speed of march the general required for rapid movement.

Regarding morale and discipline it must be acknowledged a large proportion of Essex's army was quickly overrun and ran, both at Powick and then at Edgehill – firstly among the Horse and then the Foot. The scattered Horse contributed to Essex's wise decision not to pursue the king but to retire to Warwick. Although it was a major factor this cannot completely

19 Whether they still had it by the time of the battle is a moot point.

be attributed to them being raw troops for whom the prospect of fighting was terrifying and the reality of it even worse. There was also the idea of confused loyalties. Essex may have had charisma in order to win men over to march with him, but to make them actually fight against their anointed king was perhaps expecting too much. During the battle the ironically named Sir Faithful Fortescue changed sides and rode with his entire troop out from Essex's ranks and into those of Rupert. The fact remains that the core of Essex's army was from London and at Edgehill they were very far from home.

Essex's Army Order of Battle at Edgehill

As with most battle orders for this period the list below stems from research from a wide variety of sources and a blending together of different evidence. Until a definitive contemporary document listing the correct information is discovered this can only be a 'best-guess' speculation.

RIGHT WING: Lieutenant General of Horse, Sir William Balfour.
15? troops of Horse + 12 troops of Dragoons

Flank Guard

Col. John Browne's Regiment of Dragoons 537 in 6 companies
1. Col. John Browne's
2. Sgt. Maj. Gilbert Blair
3. Capt Sir John Browne's
4. Capt. Rob. Mewer's
5. Capt. William Buchan's
6. Capt Robert Marine's

Col James Wardlawe's Regiment of Dragoons 500? in 6 companies
1. Col. James Wardlawe's
2. Lt.Col George Dundas'
3. Capt. Alexander Nerne's
4. Capt. John Barne's
5. Capt. James Stenchion's
6. Capt. Archibald Hamilton's

First Line

The Lord General's Regiment of Horse 360 in 6 troops
1. Sgt Maj John Gunter's
2. Lord Brooke's Troop
3. Capt James Sheffield's
4. Capt Henry Ireton's
5. Capt Edward Wingate's
6. Capt Thomas Temple's

Sir William Balfour's Regiment of Horse 360 in 6 troops
1. Sgt Maj William Pretty's
2. Lord Grey of Groby's
3. Capt Nathaniel Fiennes'
4. Sir Arthur Haselrig's

5. Capt Walter Long's
6. Capt Francis Dowett's

Second Line

Basil, Lord Fielding's Regiment of Horse 360 in 6 troops

1. Col. Lord Fielding's
2. ?
3. Maj. Robert Burghill's
4. Capt John Hale's
5. Capt Samuel Luke's
6. ?

CENTRE: Acting Sergeant Major General Thomas Ballard

Front and Second Line: Composed by checkerboarding alternate battalia

Right: Col. Sir John Meldrum's Brigade 2,650 in 4 regiments

1. Sir John Meldrum's Regiment of Foot 700
2. Sir William Fairfax's Regiment of Foot 750
3. Sir William Constable's Regiment of Foot 700
4. Lord Robartes' Regiment of Foot 500

Centre: Col. Charles Essex's Brigade 2,828 in 4 regiments

1. Col Charles Essex's Regiment of Foot 600
2. Lord Wharton's Regiment of Foot 500
3. Lord Mandeville's Regiment of Foot 600
4. Sir Henry Cholmley's Regiment of Foot 1,128

Left: Col. Thomas Ballard's Brigade 3,604 {700 det}in 4 regiments

1. The Lord General's Regiment of Foot, Earl of Essex's* 958
2. Col Thomas Ballard's Regiment of Foot 776 (300 det)
3. Lord Brooke's Regiment of Foot 740
4. Col Denzil Holles' Regiment of Foot 1,130 (400 det)

* Previous writers have taken references to *'some 24 troops'* to mean '24 exactly'. This does not fit the evidence. We may not have unearthed every troop present but conclude the rounding out to two dozen was an estimate qualified by the word *'some'*.

Third Line

Reserve of Horse Lord Lieutenant General of Horse William Russell, Earl of Bedford

300 in 4 troops – Stapleton's & Balfour's were double troops

1. Sir Philip Stapleton's (Essex's Lifeguard)
2. Capt Mathew Draper's (Essex's Harquebusier)
3. Sir William Balfour's
4. The Earl of Bedford's Lifeguard

LEFT WING: Commissary General Sir James Ramsey:

24+* troops + Commanded Muskets from Ballard's 300

Commanded Muskets from Holles' 400

Front and Second Line: Composed by pairing advanced and support troops

Unknown position of Sir James Ramsey's Regiment of Horse 240 in 4 troops?

1. Sir James Ramsey's
2. Sgt. Maj. William Balfour's
3. Capt Edward Clarke's
4. Capt ? Crohn
5. ?

On the right Sir William Waller's Regiment of Horse 240 in 4 troops?

1. Sir William Waller
2. Sgt. Maj. Horatio Carey
3. Capt Anthony Milemay
4. Sir Faithfull Fortesque
5. ?

On the left Col Arthur Goodwin's Regiment of Horse 360 in 6 troops?

1. Col Arthur Goodwin's
2. Sgt. Maj Sigismund Alexander
3. Capt Robert Vivers'
4. Capt Thomas Sanders'
5. Capt Richard Grenville's
6. Capt. Philip, Lord Wharton's

Unknown position Col. Edwin Sandys' Regiment of Horse 240 in 4 troops?

1. Col. Edwin Sandy's
2. Sgt. Maj. Edward Berry
3. Capt. George Austin's
4. Capt. Thomas Lidcott

Unknown position Earl of Bedford's Regiment of Horse 120 in 2 troops?

1. Capt John Flemming's
2. Capt Adrian Scrope's

Unknown position of Col. John Urry's Regiment of Horse 360 in 4 troops?

1. Col. John Urry's
2. Capt Arthur Evelyn's
3. Capt Simon Rudgely
4. ?

Along the Line

The Artillery: 16 guns from a train of 29 of which 6 were mortars and would not have been on the field and 7 were still being brought up. Any combination from the list below is possible although we favour weighting it towards the lighter pieces

2 long-barrelled 12pdrs
2 short-barrelled 12pdrs
4 6pdrs
11 short drake 3pdrs

Arriving Late:

Capt Oliver Cromwell's troop of The Lord General's Regiment of Horse
Capt John Fiennes' troop
Capt Edward Kightley's troop
Sgt Maj Alexander Douglas' troop (part)
Lord Willoughby of Parham's Regiment of Horse

Col. John Hampden's Regiment of Foot

Arriving on 24th Oct:

Lord Rochford's Regiment of Foot	710
Col.Thomas Grantham's Regiment of Foot	800 ?

Elsewhere during the Action

Two companies on detachment are known to have been posted, but from which regiment and where they were remains unclear.

Troops of Horse whose regimental allocation is unknown or unconfirmed

On the Right with Balfour:

1. ?
2. ?
3. ?

On the Left with either Bedford or Sandy's

1. Sir James Ramsey's
2. Lord Hastings'

On either Wing

1. Lord Wharton's
2. Capt. Joseph Fleming's
3. Sir Samuel Luke's

In addition there were 251 Firelocks under Captains Devereux, Turner and Tyndal that were originally members of the Lord General's Regiment. However when they left Worcester, they were converted to dragoons.[20] They took casualties at Edgehill but we have no evidence stating where or under whom they fought, although it is possible they were guarding the artillery as part of the force which came up late in the day with Hampden. There was also a company of firelocks missing from Essex's army who marched into Gloucester on 21 October having escorted the Pontoon Train from London.

20 N.A., SP 28/36, f. 482.

4

The Turnham Green Campaign, Winter 1642

During the evening of 24 September not only did several units of Essex's army begin their march for Warwick but the king's army also began its withdrawal from the Edgehill escarpment. Both sides drew apart. Who won Edgehill has been debated for many years with supporters of Parliament claiming the royalists left them holders of the field, whilst those of a royalist persuasion argue that the king still held the strategic upper hand, being in command of the road to London, Essex's route home. It was, however, this fact that determined the next phase of the campaign. With its way clear, the royal army continued its march on the capital and it began by moving from Edgehill to Edgecote.

It may have opened the road to London for his enemy, but by deciding to regroup around the parliamentarian stronghold of Warwick, Essex made a wise military decision to enable his scattered and badly battered force to reform and reorder itself before undertaking any further offensive action. The army was unusable in its current state and in practical terms the general had no option but to allow the king the strategic initiative. He needed several days before he could make a run for London and fortunately for Essex, the king gave them to him. Unmolested by royalist probes and delaying actions, he hastily re-gathered his army, provisioned and reordered as best he could and then, although still not in ideal shape, the army set off to try and beat the king to the capital.

Rupert had been all for making an immediate and decisive thrust to seize London with what today we would call a 'flying column', but he had been overruled by the king and his new lord general, Patrick Ruthven, Earl of Forth, who both took a more cautious approach, preferring to steadily advance on the capital with the whole army. They may have believed that the arrival before London of the entire force would be more intimidating than just a small part of it. Their route took them first to Banbury which they captured on 27 October. The medieval castle of Banbury had been garrisoned by about 800 men from Lord Peterborough's Regiment plus perhaps a company from Lord Saye and Sele's, but it would appear they had little stomach for a fight, 'pretending it not to be sufficiently provided for a siege, they surrendered

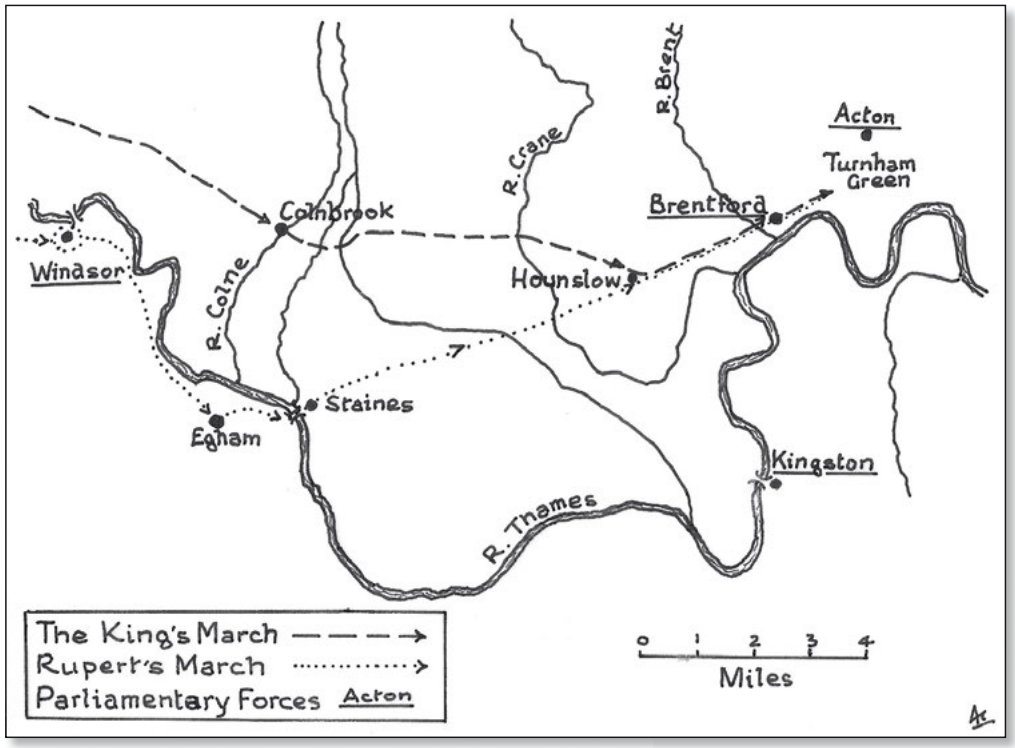
Broughton Castle, from an 18th century engraving. (Turton Collection)

it'.[1] Some of the garrison changed sides but most managed to avoid any sanction, and being allowed to slip away, were in a position to reform; Peterborough's Regiment did so within a few weeks and under most of its same officers. Nearby, more men from Saye and Sele's Regiment put up a more determined resistance behind the walls of their colonel's family home at Broughton Castle but they too were obliged to surrender when subjected to a heavy artillery bombardment. The castle was plundered and subjected to 'defacing, tearing and burning'.[2]

After Broughton, Rupert reiterated his plea to be allowed to take a flying column of cavalry, dragoons and 3,000 Foot and strike directly at London, but again he was argued down. Instead they marched slowly on to take Oxford, and Aylesbury. They left Oxford on 3 November and the next day entered Reading unopposed; its governor, Colonel Henry Marten, and its garrison had quit the place without offering any resistance. Although several historians have argued that he took the correct decision, Marten had sufficient men and defences to make some sort of resistance and buy time for Essex, but it would appear that Marten was just one in a line of men who plagued the lord general by putting their own safety above their duty.

Although marching as fast as he could for London, Essex was hopeful that a peaceful settlement could be reached before another battle took place. Parliament sent proposals to the king at Reading to enter into negotiations. He answered that he would enter into talks but stalled for time by declaring one of the men sent to treat with him, Sir John Evelyn, a traitor. Then, after even more lobbying, Rupert finally got his wish and with the force he requested, advanced to take Windsor. The castle had been garrisoned by Colonel John Venn for only a couple of days, but unlike Marten, Venn and his men were not cowed into quitting the place, despite Rupert calling up a battery of five guns and bombarding the town and castle for seven hours from the grounds of Eton College. Venn maintained his resistance and eventually Rupert realised the defences were far too strong for him to subdue, so called a halt to the bombardment. The royalists withdrew during the night to Egham leaving Windsor, 'mightily battered and ruined, and the inhabitants very much damnified'.[3] However, the combination of the king's slow advance and political chicanery as well as Rupert's attempt at glory not only gave Essex's army time to rally and reorganise in Warwick but also to make a rapid and essentially unopposed return march to London by a more direct route. This march took him to Olney, then down an old Roman road leading

1 Ludlow, op. cit, p. 46.
2 Tennant, P.E., *Edgehill and Beyond* (Stroud, Sutton, 1992), p. 76.
3 'Joyful Tidings from Windsor' quoted in South, R., *Royal Castle, Rebel Town* (Buckingham, Barracuda, 1991), p.33.

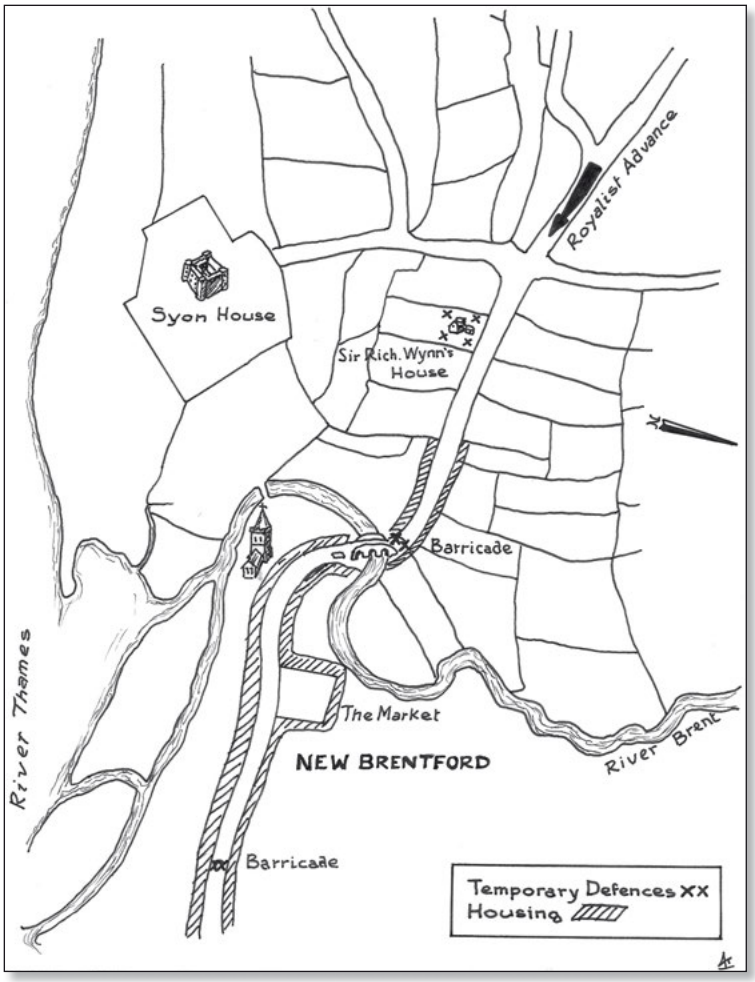


The Route to Turnham Green. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

to Northampton, Woburn and St Albans, and then finally into northwest London in early November. He might well have tried to intercept the king or endeavoured to save the various parliamentarian garrisons which were overrun, but he maintained his principal objective, which was the protection of London, by interposing his army between his city and his king. It was to be expected that the sacrifice of these garrisons, albeit a sound strategic decision, was criticised.

Essex arrived in the City on 7 November and was given a rapturous reception by the Londoners. He had fought the king to a standstill in a pitched battle and brought his army home to be available for its defence. However, London had not been totally unprotected. The London Trained Bands, about 6,000 strong, had been mustered and Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick had also been commissioned to raise a further seven regiments of Foot especially to resist any attempt to take the capital. With the Trained Bands and Warwick's 'army', the arrival of Essex's army meant Parliament could put a considerable force in the field if called upon to do so. The proximity of the royalist army made just such a demand.

Troops were dispatched westward to guard the approaches to London. One body of 3,000 of Essex's men was sent under Sir James Ramsey to garrison the town of Kingston with its crossing of the Thames whilst smaller detachments occupied Acton and Brentford. The royal army arrived at Hounslow on 11 November and whilst his army, now numbering some 13,000, encamped on the heath, the king with a very large escort rode to Colnbrook where he again entered into negotiations with a party of commissioners from Parliament. He fully expected these men would bow to his authority but they quibbled



The Battle of Brentford. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

over the conditions of the talks, so, to lend weight to his position, he agreed to Rupert making an immediate attack on the garrison of Brentford as a demonstration of royal strength. Parliament meanwhile had ordered Essex not to take any offensive action which might upset the delicate nature of the negotiations.

In 1642 the town of Brentford consisted of the combined villages of Brentford End, New Brentford and Old Brentford spaced along a single street about a mile in length which was the road west to Isleworth. The River Brent looped eastwards around and through the settlement before running south and flowing into the Thames. The road crossed this river by means of an arched bridge amid the most western houses of Brentford End. South of the urban sprawl were the orchards, enclosures and parkland of Syon House, the home of the Earl of Northumberland.

The parliamentarian force in Brentford consisted of Edgehill units from Essex's army: two regiments of Foot, those of Lord Brooke and Denzil Holles which together numbered around 1,300 men, and two pieces of light artillery. They were initially supported by a number of troops of Horse who were, with the exception of Capt. Robert Vivers' under-strength troop, destined to flee at the start of the action. The parliamentarians had arrived on 11 November but quite a few were without weapons, having loaded them onto carts which had not been able to keep up with pace of march. Many of Holles' men who had weapons had been sent by their commander, Lieutenant Colonel James Quarles, a short distance to the west along the Isleworth road to fortify a large house belonging to Sir Richard Wynne, whilst he had others take up positions among the houses, hedges and orchards near the bridge. Those without arms built barricades or helped to nail up windows and doors before seeking improvised weapons from farm sheds and smithies. In Old Brentford , Brooke's men 'barricadoed the narrow avenues to the town, and cast up some little breastworks at the most convenient places'.[4] They also set up their two guns to cover any advance up the thoroughfare. The troop of Horse was posted in support to the rear.

4 Clarendon, op. cit, p. 319.

Rupert, who commanded the attack and led his cavalrymen forward on 12 November under the cover of a thick morning mist, taking advantage of sleepy sentries and poor visibility. Holles' men were indeed taken by surprise, not least because they were expecting a cessation of hostilities due to the peace talks. However, as soon as the royalists were spotted, the alarm was raised and a hasty stand-to organised, so that when Rupert's horsemen came down the Isleworth road and approached Wynne's house they were met by a ferocious volley of musketry which caused casualties and confusion. The advance was halted and it became obvious that the house had been fortified and could not be taken by cavalry. Rupert retired to wait for his Foot to come up.

Forth arrived with the Foot and several small guns. They relieved the cavalry and stormed through the suburbs and, in the face of determined resistance from Holles' redcoats, with the help of their small guns they took Wynne's house. The parliamentarians fell back into the town to their defence which was centred upon the barricaded town bridge and the surrounding houses and hedges. Forth's men reformed, advanced and attacked. After an hour of dogged persistence and in spite of the obstacles and houses which they had to clear, here too they won the fight. They may have taken the barricaded bridge, but they had not taken the town, because Holles' men merely fell back to the other prepared position manned by Brooke's Regiment and supported by his two pieces of artillery. Forth had no option but to launch a frontal assault. It took a lot longer than expected, but after about two and half hours of attack after attack, the royalist numbers finally carried the position and they broke through the grimly held line. Essex's men ran. Many streamed through the town heading for the safety of London whilst others jumped into the Thames in an endeavour to get away. Of the whole engagement the royalist officer, Captain John Gwyn, says that they 'beat them from one Brainford to the other, and thence to the open field' where an 'abundance of them were killed and taken prisoner besides those drowned in their attempt to escape by leaping into the river'.[5] Just how many drowned or managed to swim to safety is not recorded but those who did manage to escape from the town found succour behind John Hampden's Regiment which had been coming down from Uxbridge to shore up the garrison and arrived in time to provide a safe haven for survivors of the fight. Forth's men were far too exhausted and disordered to contemplate attacking a fresh unit, so halted their pursuit. About 50 parliamentarian soldiers were killed and whilst Essex's men made a dejected retreat back to London, the royalists rounded up about 300 prisoners, gathered six to eight colours, and took away the two guns; they then set about pillaging and burning Brentford. Rupert ordered the place to be sacked 'as a punishment for having attached itself to the side of the rebels'.[6] The message of the fall of the town was carried to king and the parliamentary commissioners in Colnbrook. It did not have the effect the king sought.

5 Young, P. & Norman, T. (eds.), *Military Memoirs of Captain John Gwyn* (London 1967) p. 46.

6 *C.S.P. Venetian 1642/43,* (London 1925), p. 205.

News of the terrible destruction of an English town by an English army under the command of a King of England sent shock waves through the capital, and Parliament made good use of its propaganda value. The royalists were said to be kin to the rapacious Spanish cavaliers who had terrorised the Low Countries with their barbarity and wanton cruel destructiveness. King Charles had broken his coronation oath to protect his subjects and by ordering an attack whilst negotiating peace he was plainly untrustworthy and clearly an unfit monarch. This unattractive and duplicitous nature would eventually cost him his head. London was outraged and cries were heard demanding that never again would a royal army be permitted to enter the City and that the king was guilty 'of Treachery, Perfidy and Blood; and that he had given the Spoil and Wealth of the City as Pillage to his Army which advanced with no other purpose'.[7]

Also believing that the peace negotiations would put an end to immediate hostilities, Essex had attended the House of Lords that morning and was surprised to hear the sound of the guns at Brentford. He left the House and rode for Chelsea, where he had ordered a significant portion of his army to muster. Before leaving Westminster he sent a message to the Common Council of the City of London, asking them to release the Trained Bands and send them to augment his defence force. At Chelsea he reviewed his men and upon learning of the reversal at Brentford ordered that they prepared to march westward to forestall any further royalist advances.

Believing the king's true nature had been revealed and fearing his intentions of vengeful slaughter, rape and pillage, Londoners rallied around Essex as he gathered together all the forces he could muster to march out and face the royal army in a desperate battle for London's survival. As anger at the news of the sacking of the neighbouring town spread through the capital, large numbers flocked to the colours of the Trained Bands, the London Auxiliaries and Warwick's regiments.[8] So on Sunday 13 November, together with his original army, Warwick's new army and the London Trained bands, Essex mustered some 24,000 armed men on a large expanse of open land enclosed by hedgerows in the outskirts of west London; a space comprising Turnham Green, Chiswick Back Common and Acton Green. To its south lay the village of Chiswick and the walled gardens of the Jacobean Chiswick House.

Essex rode up in the company of members from both Houses and was greeted by the regiments with loud cheers of "Hey for Old Robin!" He formed the army into line across the open ground making use of whatever protective cover the terrain provided. As the army was deployed, Essex rode amongst them ensuring that his experienced units were intermingled with those who were untried. The placing of battle-tested units next to those of no experience was clever as it instilled confidence into his raw troops. They formed a single long defensive line behind hedges and ditches and with infantry occupying the centre and cavalry on the wings. The train of artillery was brought to Hammersmith from its park at Knightsbridge to await deployment.

7 Clarendon, op. cit.

8 Even sailors left their ships to join the exodus of armed men to the west.

The king's army marched out of Hounslow towards Hammersmith and as the first of the 13,000 royalists arrived to face the cobbled-together parliamentarian force, Essex ordered up his guns from Hammersmith and brought them into his line. He then detached Hampden northwards with two regiments of Horse and four of Foot to occupy some high ground about Acton and overlooking the royalist left flank. He also sent orders for Kingston to be abandoned and for Ramsey, with its garrison, to cross London Bridge to the south bank of the Thames. By vacating Kingston, Essex had sacrificed the last bridge across the Thames west of London, and so ordered the construction of a bridge of boats at Putney, paying watermen and workers £150 to bring craft upriver from the city docks and to build it.[9] He then countermanded his previous instructions and recalled Hampden to rejoin the main army. What Essex intended by these moves is unclear. The move onto the king's flank was sound but combined with moving Ramsey it would appear to have weakened his strength and then having seen the folly of this action he set about rescuing the situation. There are some grounds to believe that this apparent vacillation was the result of some disagreements among the high command; Essex was never good at sharing responsibility.[10]

A part of Ramsey's infantry force and some more artillery was ordered to be moved from Kingston by river in several large barges. As they came down the Thames and drew level with Syon House, a battery of royalist guns and their protective body of musketeers, placed in the parkland by Colonel Thomas Blagge, opened fire on them. The barges tried to fire back but were hopelessly outmatched and soon ran out of ammunition. One boat, under the command of Captain George Phillips was blown up and the rest of the barges were obliged to give up their attempt to ferry men downriver and put about.

Two hours later the royalist deployment on Turnham Green was completed. Their advance on the capital would only continue if they could destroy the obstacle in their way. Essex's army was arrayed in their path offering battle, 'in their brightest Equipage upon the Heath' an army, 'fit to have decided the Title of a Crown'.[11] By contrast Clarendon also notes the royal army appeared 'harassed, weather-beaten and half-starved'.[12] Both sides stood watching the other. Essex's forces were nearly twice the king's numbers, many of whom were defending their homes, which made the king loath to launch a general attack, whilst Essex too was reluctant to begin the action, realising that a good half of his force was untried and many of the others had run at Edgehill. The ordinary soldiers however were apparently willing to fight. The London Trained Bands had been harangued by their leader Sergeant Major General Philip Skippon with the words, "Come my Boyes my Brave Boyes, let us pray heartily and fight heartily".[13] But instead of

9 N.A., SP 28/3A/96.

10 It is thought that Hampden had urged a plan to turn both flanks of the royal army via Acton and Kingston. However, some professional officers on Essex's staff thought it would be unwise to trust the London militias to stand whilst a substantial part of the hard core of the army marched away to effect this envelopment.

11 Clarendon, *op. cit.*, p. 320.

12 *Ibid*.

13 Adair, H., *The Patriot: A Life Of John Hampden* (London, 1976), p. 199.

Philip Skippon from a contemporary print. (Turton Collection)

charging into each other, both sides waited and did so until nearly 3.00 pm when each opened up with their artillery and also sent out parties of dragoons and commanded muskets to skirmish, causing some casualties but not many.[14] At best the fighting was desultory.

Being November, daylight soon faded and towards the end of the day the people of London brought provisions out to 'their army'. Around 100 cartloads of food and drink, including meals from their own tables were freely distributed among the men. From the royalists' viewpoint it must have appeared they were also being reinforced in their thousands.

As evening approached the gunfire died away. The king realised that he did not have sufficient men to take the offensive against a vastly numerically superior enemy, added to which he was rather short of ammunition. Moreover as Essex was only offering a defensive action and had a good position with adequate cover, any attack would be costly. It could also be argued that even if the king fought and won and then pressed on into London, his reception would be very hostile, so he ordered a withdrawal. Covered by Rupert's Horse and some Foot under Sir Jacob Astley as a rearguard, Forth withdrew the royal army back though the blackened timbers of Brentford. Rupert was again annoyed, this time because Astley had only a handful of musketeers holding Brentford Bridge rather than the force of 500 he had suggested. So using his own troopers for the job and placing himself 'in ye water set his horse till ye others marched over ye Bridge'.[15] The royal army marched westward, some halting at Kingston and others all the way to their camp on Hounslow Heath. The king slept at Hampton Court. Essex marched after them but only as far as Brentford where he compassionately had the army do whatever it could to aid the distressed inhabitants. Some of the food brought to Turnham Green by the citizens of London was handed over.

No further offers of peace negotiations were advanced by Parliament. Clarendon records that they fully intended to 'keep off all Propositions for Peace whilst the [royal] Army lay so near London'.[16] After releasing the common soldiers captured at Brentford as a more expedient option than trailing them along with them, but keeping prisoner a number of officers including Captains Vivers and John Lilburne, the royalists fell back first to Reading where they left a garrison and then returned to Oxford, where the king proposed to go into winter quarters and establish his court. Essex made no attempt to follow them beyond Brentford other than sending men to once again occupy Kingston; he marched back victorious into London. Nor did he attempt to organise a pursuit as the royal army withdrew even further. The king had failed and in the eyes of his supporters throughout his Edgehill campaign, Essex had prevented the royalists the luxury of raising an army undisturbed, sought them out and been victorious in a major battle, and then,

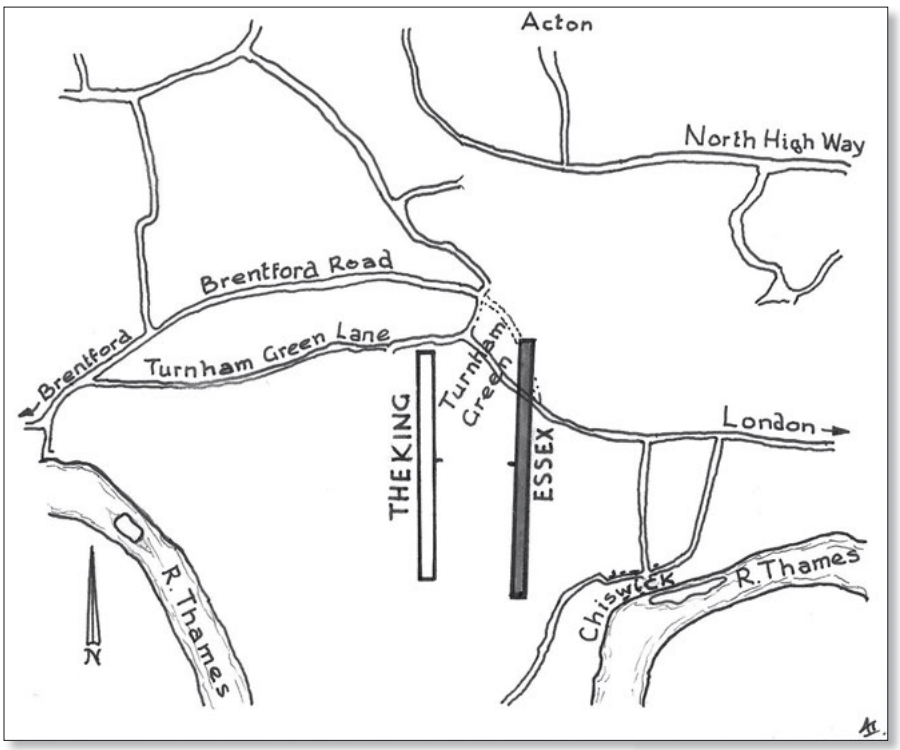
14 Clarendon claimed that Essex's guns killed only four men and five horses. *Ibid*, p. 76. The likely losses were about 20 per side.

15 W&SHC, 'Prince Rupert's Diary' quoted in P. Young, *op. cit.* p. 286.

16 Clarendon, op.cit. p. 322.

having brought his army safely home, had been the hero of the hour and saved the capital.

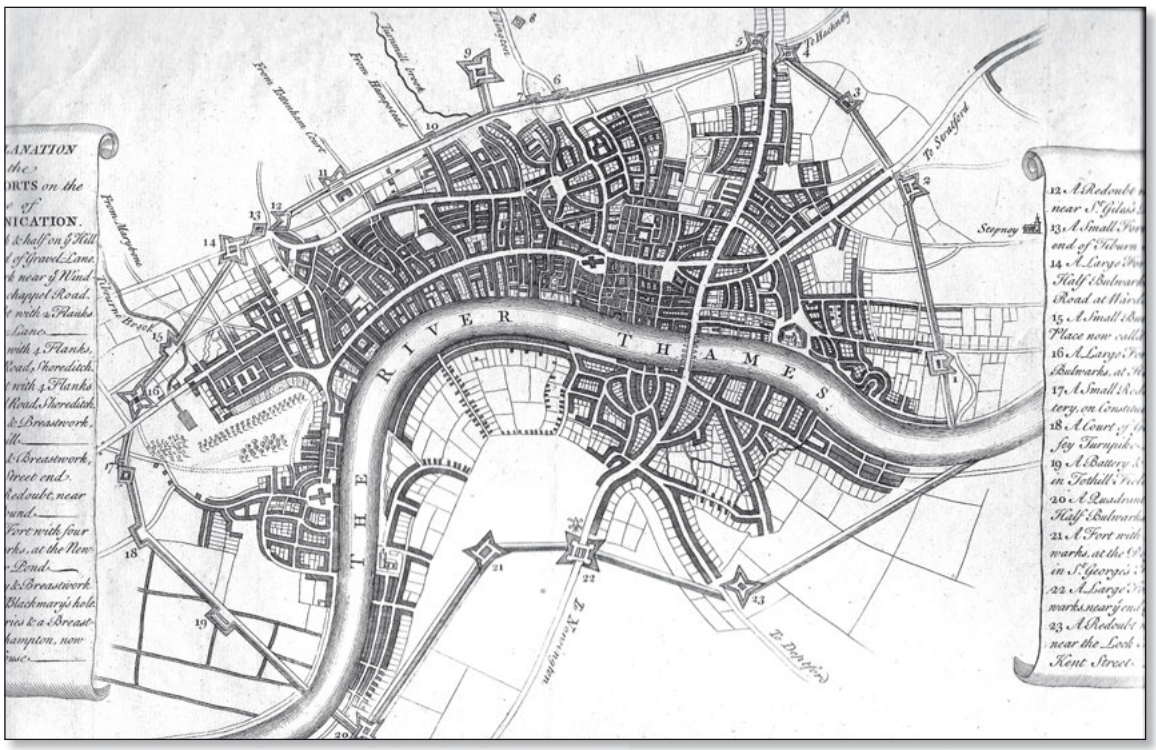
However, Essex had his enemies, and his detractors were already critical of his lack of aggression in not taking the opportunity to destroy the king's army when he outnumbered it so convincingly at Turnham Green. They also questioned why he had not chased it and harried it to disintegration instead of permitting it to occupy Reading and retire to winter quarters in Oxford. It seemed to them, not comprehending the unreliability and indeed fragility of raw troops, that Essex had missed the chance to end the war at a stroke.



The Deployments at Turnham Green. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

However, the telling result of Turnham Green was not only that the royal army, even after their claim of an initial success at Edgehill, did not dare attack Essex's army in a defensive position, but also that the king and his advisors finally realised that the Londoners were fully prepared to defy both their monarch and his army. The citizen soldiers had flocked to Essex's banners and the ordinary people had also turned out, some to swell the ranks and others to bring them provisions. What was even more revealing to those supporting the royal cause was there had been no rising in London, not even a demonstration in support of the king, even though the royal army was just a few miles from the city. It must have been a sobering moment for both Essex and the king as both men now knew that any future royalist march on London was likely to meet a similar fate, and this meant that Essex could now campaign without always fearing a royalist occupation of the capital.

Having outfaced the king, most of the army went into winter quarters but the engineers and pioneers of Essex's Train had now to switch their attention to erecting substantial defences for London. When the war broke out, hurried improvements had been made to the existing defences. Gateways which gave access to the city on major roads were repaired whilst improvised barriers were erected to permanently bar minor ones, or, where frequent daily access was needed, great chains were installed which could be raised at will (although not particularly defensible they would have provided an impediment to any attacking force). Several guardhouses were also built



The Defences of London, George Virtue 1738. (Turton Collection)

for troops on duty to respond to any surprise incursion and a few small earthworks were raised.

On the 7 September 1642, the City authorities had ordered that the defences be strengthened and the design and implementation of the work was put into the hands of Philip Skippon who had seen service at the sieges of Breda and Maastricht. As Skippon was also sergeant major general of the City and the suburban Trained Bands, he was certainly the man to take charge, although it may be that Dutch engineers were also involved in both the design and construction.[17] Work on these plans commenced but, following the fright of Turnham Green in November 1642, London's government, the Court of Common Council, ordered a much fuller survey of the city's defences, which was undertaken in February 1643 by local alderman and colonel of a militia regiment, Randall Mainwaring. His recommendations for further works and the formation of a Committee of Fortifications were accepted but Skippon remained in overall authority.

The plans to further extend the works were approved by Parliament on 7 March and by the end of the month labourers had succeeded in constructing several important sections of the full defensive ring planned by Skippon and Mainwaring. As the work proceeded, the men found the sheer enormity of the task daunting and so sought help from the citizens. The cry went out for volunteers to aid in the task. Supported by the Worshipful Livery Companies of the City as well as the Council, the citizenry responded with extraordinary zeal, and some 20,000 people are thought to have turned out and laboured on the construction of earthworks and redoubts both north

17 Saunders, A., *Fortress Britain* (Liphook, Beaufort, 1979), p.72.

and south of the Thames, complete with raised walls and ditches, forts and barbican gates. With such a huge workforce, by mid May they had erected a line of fortifications just over 11 miles in length.[18] Hundreds of guns were mounted upon these new works but they were never needed to be fired in anger. Ironically the only time they were all fired was as a salute to the Earl of Essex during his funeral in 1646.

With London now adequately protected, Essex and the army could, when it came out of winter quarters, return to the business of fighting in the field.

18 Calendars State Paper Venetian, 1642-43, vol. 26, p.273.

5

The Reading Campaign, Spring 1643

As the royalists fell back from Turnham Green, first via Kingston and Oatlands, then west through Bagshot towards Oxford, the king sent a command to the mayor and aldermen of Reading instructing them to ensure that Caversham Bridge was in good repair. He was concerned that it should be strong enough for his army with their guns and wheeled transports to use. What he expected them to do if it was not strong enough or even broken down, was unclear, but at 8.00 am the next day on 19 November the royal army arrived and entered Reading. The small parliamentarian garrison which had reoccupied it after the royal army had left for London had hurriedly decamped a few days earlier, abandoning their charge when news came of the royal retreat from Turnham Green and the imminent arrival of the king's forces. Although most probably pro-Parliament a politically correct show of loyalty was made on the king's entry to the town with church bells and garlands in the streets, and the royal army soon took full advantage of the stores left behind by the parliamentarians and the accommodation afforded by the town; indeed they stayed in Reading for most of the rest of November.[1]

During this stay large contracts were given to the town's tailors to produce a thousand suits of clothes and these craftsmen worked for many weeks to complete this order which was distributed amongst the Oxford Army the following spring. Eventually, leaving an occupying garrison of 2,000 Foot under Sir Arthur Aston, the main royal army left Reading over Caversham Bridge on 28 November and headed for Oxford and winter quarters.[2]

After the stand-off at Turnham Green and the end of the Edgehill Campaign, the armies of both sides went into winter quarters. It being reasonable to predict bad weather during the winter months, armies tended to remain hunkered down in houses, outbuildings, barns or more substantial huts for protection from the cold, snow, winter rain storms and biting winds. Because of their numbers, armies were often dispersed among towns and villages so as to find enough accommodation and supplies and do something

1 Disbury, D., *Berkshire in the Civil War* (Egham,1978).

2 It would interesting to speculate that part of the reason for this stay in Reading was due to Caversham Bridge being repaired although there are no records pertaining to this.

to relieve the tremendous strain upon the forbearance and resources of local populations. Essex was lucky that much of his army, being recruited mainly from London and the surrounding area, could return home and not impose billeting or feeding problems on the army. Naturally regiments also suffered from desertions as not everyone returned to their colours.

One of the main billeting areas was in and around Windsor but other parts of the army were more dispersed and went to selected venues in east Berkshire and Buckinghamshire so as to prevent royalist raiding parties 'from annoying the Countries'.[3] Sir Samuel Luke as Scoutmaster General set up his intelligence headquarters in Eton College from where he gathered information which he continually relayed to Essex. However, just having an army, albeit one in winter quarters, meant endless administration to keep the men paid and fed, let alone drilled in the use of arms. There were also new recruits and Warwick's regiments to train and bring up to an acceptable standard. Moreover, some units were kept on standby and had to remain concentrated in order to respond to any threat so as to buy time for the rest of the army to reassemble and deploy, and these men also needed accommodation and food. The staff work this entailed must have taken its toll on Essex and his senior officers. Part of this included organising the defence of London. Essex positioned troops in the western suburbs, particularly around Hounslow and Uxbridge; and he established his H.Q. at Windsor Castle, lodging in the great Round Tower, a decision which caused considerable friction with the governor, Colonel Venn. Essex and his staff would also have been consulted on the overhaul of London's defences – not always easy work in the depths of winter, especially as an additional task.

In London cold winter conditions, exacerbated by the cutting off of coal supplies from Newcastle, appeared to lend weight to the demands upon Essex to make some sort of move against the king, including forcible suggestions that he should at least attack Reading. Reading was of strategic importance as it sat on the confluence of the Kennet and the Thames and had bridges over both rivers. It was also a wealthy cloth town due the excellent trade infrastructure of the river and road links to London, Bristol and the West as well as Southampton and the South. It also controlled the Goring Gap – the break in the Chilterns which allowed the easier passage of armies.

Charles thought that as long as his men held Reading as an outpost, Essex would not be able to advance on him easily and the garrison scouts could keep a wary eye on any parliamentarian troop movements in the Thames Valley and make his intelligence officers aware of any likely developments. So with his headquarters at Oxford and his garrison at Reading as his forward base, he commenced setting up supporting major outposts at Abingdon and Wallingford plus fortified garrisons in Banbury and Brill, and unfortified ones in Faringdon and Burford. He also threw out a series of petty garrisons into several villages which were partially fortified and the whole network soon became known as 'the ring of steel about Oxford'. He kept four regiments of Foot in Oxford itself and they were used to both man the existing defences and organise the digging of new earthworks including trenches, strong-points and forts.

3 May, T., *The History of the Parliament of England* (1647), p.35.

In London, Essex's position was under threat with more criticism of his not following up the king's retreat; moreover to his great annoyance Sir William Waller was gradually becoming a firm favourite among his political enemies. In a move that intensified the rivalry, Waller was given permission to take the offensive with an independent command. Using units from Essex's army, which must have galled, he pushed out the boundaries of London's influence by taking Farnham, Winchester and Chichester and such was his success that his reputation began to overshadow that of the commander-in-chief. Waller was nicknamed 'William the Conqueror' and Essex's detractors seized upon him as their champion to rival the lord general, citing his active prosecution of the war as a contrast with the endless preparations, administration and political committee work that had become Essex's lot. However, by December 1642, conditions for the townsfolk of Reading were also deteriorating.

The king's governor, Sir Arthur Aston, was unpopular with his men and the town alike. He was a professional soldier, having learnt his trade fighting for the Poles against the Swedes. He was a strict disciplinarian and a Catholic with little time for non-conformists and wealthy independents among the garrison and townspeople. He was a 'hanging governor' and it was believed he did so with little provocation. According to a parliamentarian writer, 'Wednesday last, Colonel Aston feasted the Magistrates of Reading and hanged a man or two'.[4] One of the men was a soldier from London called Boyes, who was believed to be a parliamentarian sympathizer and was tried and executed for spying.[5] Aston was 'greatly esteemed where he was not known and greatly detested where he was'.[6]

Aston soon began demanding money to finance the war. He was authorised to impose a weekly 'taxation' from which he could draw a salary of £7 per week from the loyal inhabitants but twice he also extracted additional forced loans of £2,000 from the Corporation. They had to mortgage their Wool Hall and other council properties, as well as raise money on their prospective market tolls in order to pay. Petitions to the king for relief and repayment were to no avail. Adding to the expense of having a royal garrison was the demand to rebuild the town's defences at the Corporation's own cost. The Free School became an arsenal used to store quantities of arms, and billeting demands increased as even more soldiers arrived. More than 3,000 soldiers were quartered upon 5,000 inhabitants, including Belasyse's Regiment which transferred in from Banbury. Aston was also allocated 4 brass 3-pounder guns, 80 balls and 4 barrels of powder plus 9 crewmen as well as a quantity of match and entrenching tools. He was later assigned more ammunition and a further 8 guns.[7] Men were quartered in the Reading Friary, in the royal stables, and the old hospital of St John. Private houses were requisitioned like John Kendrick's 'house of industry' in Minster Street, and farms too were occupied such as Thomas Harrison's barn on Whitley Hill. Reading itself became a large fortress and all the gates and ways into and out of the town were guarded. Military patrols were out in the streets at night and quiet

4 Disbury, op.cit., p.41.
5 Records of the church of St. Laurence, Reading.
6 Clarendon, pp.cit. VIII, 121.
7 Barres-Baker, M.C., *The Siege of Reading, April 1643* (Ottowa, eBooksLib., 1957), p.29.

townsmen supposedly went in fear of their lives. Soldiers, especially if in want, are seldom respecters of people and private property, and ordinary townsfolk were openly robbed and houses broken into. Where resistance to the stripping of a house was encountered, the owner was sometimes rewarded with having his home set alight. Such was the contempt for law and order that even several local magistrates were attacked and beaten. Neither wagons nor packhorses dared venture out for fear of being relieved of their cargos. Additionally there were often alarms at all times of the day and night, which had their foundation in the fact that Essex was just a short march away and could soon be before the walls. Royalist propaganda rendered Essex a bogeyman and his army the minions of the devil incarnate. Trade collapsed, including Reading's famous cloth trade which had made the royal soldiers suits. Although the clothiers were still kept busy, continually fulfilling orders for even more clothes for the garrison and those in Oxford, they seldom, if ever, received the promised payment. The garrison become disgruntled and several of its officers requested permission to leave due to overcrowding and lack of provisions and sanitation. The whole town suffered. Word was sent to Parliament complaining of the town's distress for if the king would not listen perhaps the honourable members would, and Essex might come to their rescue.

S^R WILLIAM WALLER Knight Sargeant
Maior Generall of y^e Parliaments army and
a member of y^e Hono^ble House of Commons
1643

Sir William Waller, engraving by Peter Stent 1643. (Turton Collection)

Parliament did listen and ordered Essex to investigate ways in which he could throw the royalists out and take Reading back into their control. The garrison of Reading was then around 3,000 and whilst Aston may have been inferior in both numbers of infantry and cannon, his command was being stocked with ammunition and provender ordered in from as far afield as Newbury, and not only did he have the town's existing defences, but he began to undertake a complex array of new works so that the place would be well prepared for a siege.

Reading is built in a natural defensive position, being protected from the north by the Thames and having the Kennet run through its centre. It also had some medieval walls of the old abbey. However, additional works were needed to augment these features and they were constructed both east and west of the Kennet and its several brooks. Throughout the early months of 1643 these works gradually formed an extensive four-sided array of earthwork banks, ditches, palisades, ramparts and redoubts linking the old defences and stone buildings fortified as strongpoints.[8] These earth walls were said to have been made as high as a house and topped with wooden palisades. Moreover several other minor fortifications of ditches and drawbridges were created to

8 Such fortified buildings included Grey Friars Priory and the Abbey.

protect all the entrances to the town as well other outworks erected to guard places thought worthy of special attention, including larger redoubts erected at Forebury, Harrison's Barn and at the end of Pangbourne Lane.[9] Another such work was built southeast of Caversham Bridge. The bridge itself was also modified to include a drawbridge whilst the fields to the east appeared to have been strewn with caltrops or other similar anti-personnel/horse devices. To the south of the town, the water meadows of the Kennet were deliberately flooded, rendering them virtually impossible to cross. There was disagreement about the strength of these fortifications. Clarendon thought them 'very mean to endure a formed siege' whilst Luke reported 'their forts are well wrought, and strong both with trenches and pallisadoes.'[10]

The work was carried out not only by the garrison but Aston made himself even more unpopular by using forced civilian labour, including that of leading townsmen who were sent to work at Forebury. These wealthy men could 'buy' their way out of this labour at a rate of 8d per diem and, further reducing his popularity, he also commandeered bales of wool from the cloth merchants to build into his works to enhance their ability to absorb shock. He also levied a tax of £102 per household against which the inhabitants petitioned the king, only to be met with a further instruction from Oxford to raise a further £2,000. Aston also impressed a Reading Regiment raised from townsfolk and men from the surrounding area, but they soon deserted.[11] However, with all this preparation he was confident that by late spring he had done what he could to withstand Essex and anything he could throw at Reading.

Essex was already formulating plans to march on the town. On 21 January 1643, he had launched a surprise attack on Henley which he captured with some ease, ejecting the royalist garrison and installing one of his own. Aston sent a scout to discover this force's numbers and state of readiness. There was a counter attack but it was driven off with such loss that Aston hanged the scout whom he accused of giving them false situation report. The king's Army Council interpreted this taking of Henley as a move to isolate Reading as a preliminary to an attack on Oxford itself, so they ordered another attempt to retake Henley. It was launched at night and failed miserably. By the close of January 1643 Essex had fortified the place and established a supply depot with a strong garrison. Henley had become his riverside base near to Reading and a part of his plans to support a spring offensive.[12]

At this time yet another attempt was made by the peace faction to negotiate terms with the king. These went on through January, February and March only to fail again and break up mid April, 'All our labours and hazards became fruitless.[13] The campaign to retake Reading, first designed to begin in March

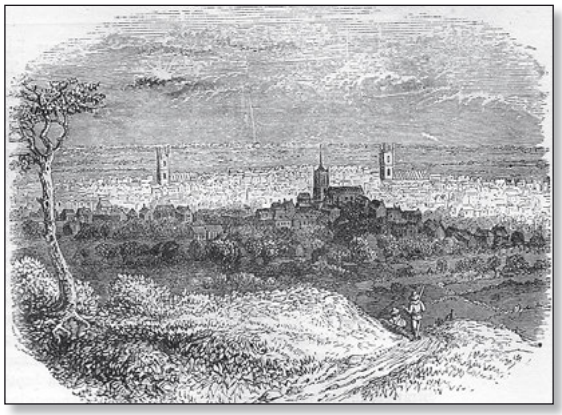
9 Disbury, op.cit. p.41. Pangbourne Lane is the continuation of the Oxford/Caversham Road.

10 Clarendon, op.cit., VII, 24.; Lords Journals, VI, 19.

11 Just how successful pressed regiments were in action was a debatable question, but so too must be the ability of men to desert inside their own city. Where would they go and where could they hide?

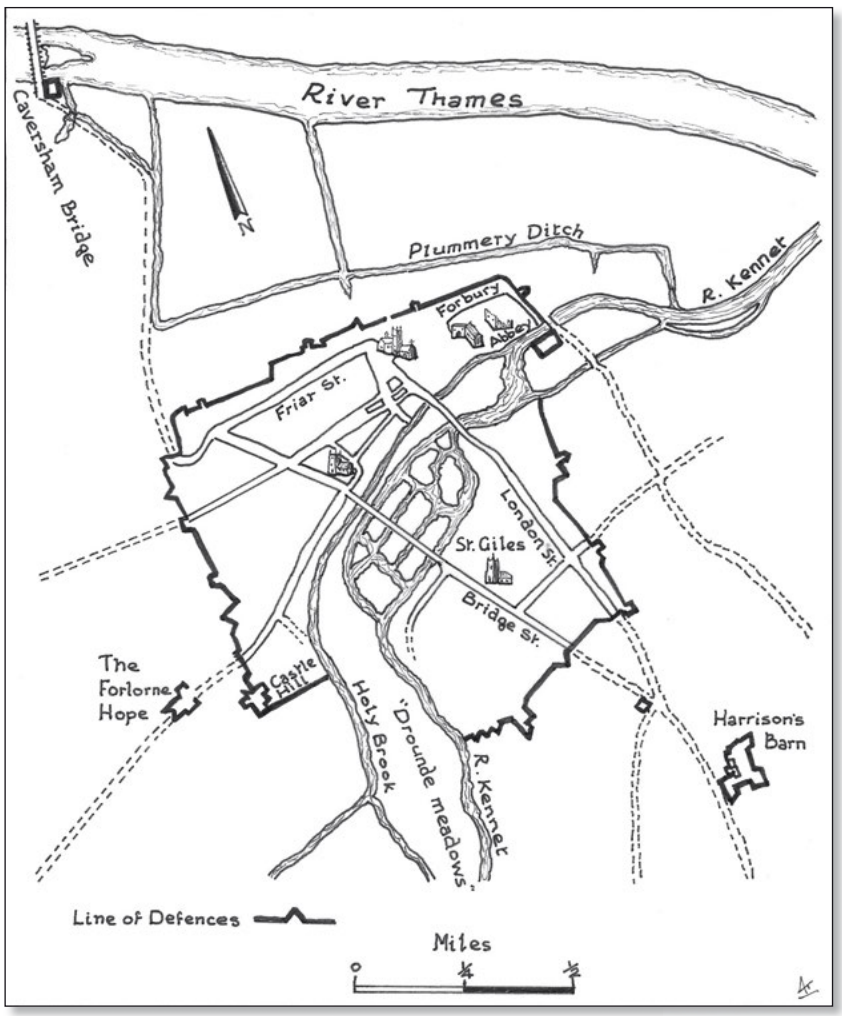
12 Tracts, Reading Reference Library. *Good and True Newes from Redding.*

13 Bulstrode Whitlock, *Memorials of English Affairs During the Reign of King Charles the First* (1708), pp. 67-9. Whether deserters were indeed rounded up and hanged is unknown.



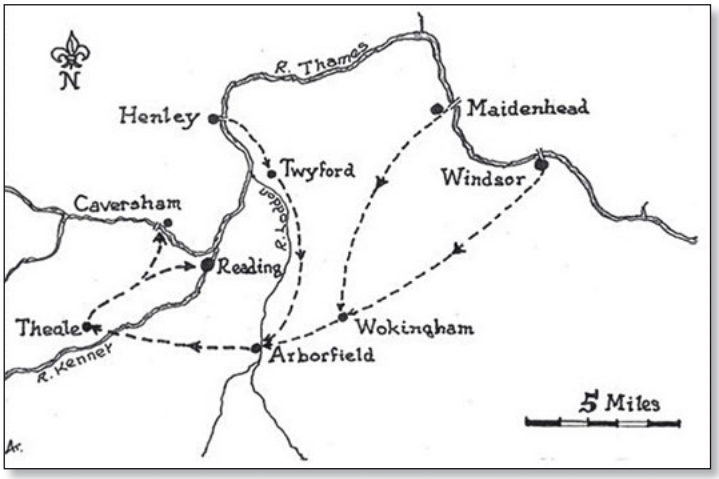
Reading from Caversham Hill, from an old print. (Turton Collection)

but was delayed due to these talks and then again to lack of supplies and men. Edgehill had taken its toll on Essex's army. In November 1642 few of his regiments had more than 600 men, and by February 1643 the situation was critical: the realisation that Holles' and Brooke's Regiments had been more seriously depleted at Brentford than first thought; that men were not returning quickly to the colours as expected; and that pay not being forthcoming was leading to increased desertions meant that the winter-quartered units were seriously under strength, and the smaller units were amalgamated. Mandeville's Regiment mustered 139 and it along with Wharton's, was disbanded. In total seven regiments were disbanded and four moved to other theatres of operation. The army was however augmented in time for Henley by the arrival of Sir Phillip Skippon's Regiment and was then allocated a further seven new regiments. However, apart from Skippon's, they too were under-strength and needed to recruit.



The Siege Defences of Reading. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

Pay was finally sent to Windsor and with reports that the talks were about to break up without achieving anything, on 8 April Essex gave a last chance to the men still absent from their colours to return to obedience. A proclamation was made 'on and about London by the beating of a Drum that all Officers and Souldiers within the said City belonging to the Lord Generall's Army upon paine of death should forthwith repaire to their Rendezvous at Windsor.' Notice was also given through the same proclamation that 'the Lord Generall and his whole



The Approach to Reading.
(Map drawn by Alan Turton)

Army intending to advance upon their designs … '[14] It was further reported in a newspaper that Essex had mustered considerable numbers of horses and carts in Windsor and that the army 'will be in Action suddainly'.[15]

All the local antagonism caused by Aston throughout early 1643 ensured that Essex had almost daily spy reports and consequently a very good understanding of the strength and weakness of the garrison and the town's defences. Moreover he had received letters promising not only support from the town but an internal armed rising should he attempt to storm it.[16] His army was ready and all the signs for a swift and decisive strike against the town were good. He ordered the army to march.

On 13 April Essex and his army left Windsor and marched west. As the force of some 16,000 Foot, 3,000 Horse and its siege artillery train left the castle and town, the cry of 'Hey for Old Robin' echoed through the streets.[17] Unfortunately the name of each troop is not known but the Foot regiments were:

From his old army:

Ballard's, Chomley's, Constable's, Essex's, Hampden's, Meldrum's, Peterborough's, Roberts's and Rochford's

Newly raised:

Barclay's, Holborn's, Holmstead's, Langham's and Skippon's

The artillery consisted of some 16 pieces, including siege guns such as 'Roaring Megs' from the Tower.

There has long been a controversy about the route of this advance from Windsor to Reading, with academic arguments being produced for both a route north of the Thames and another south of it. We agree with those who argue for the southern route and for a full explanation of this well referenced argument we suggest readers refer to Barres-Baker Appendix 'The Caversham Hill Fort and Essex's Route to Reading'.[18]

En-route from Windsor to Reading, Essex kept strict discipline, having two men hanged for mutiny and another shot for murder, and by 15 April they reached Arborfield ready to cross the Lodden south of Reading. Calling in the garrison of Henley, they threw new military bridges over the river as Essex had previously ordered the old ones destroyed to prevent royalist threats to Windsor. Having crossed the river, the army marched west then

14 TT. E. 247. (21).
15 TT. E. 96. (12).
16 Disbury,D., op.cit. p. 43.
17 The figure of 16,000 is derived from the newspaper A Perfect Diurnall and by our reasoning seems to be an exaggeration. 12,000 is the more likely number. Rochford's was recorded at 315.
18 Barres-Baker, op.cit., pp.230-233.

swung north and, 'late at night we sat before Reading, being Saturday at night.'[19] Essex did not approach the town from the east as expected, and where he would encounter both forward redoubts and flooded fields, but marched in a wide loop south around the town so as to appear on its western side, thus placing his force in a position to attack any possible relief Aston might receive from Oxford. To further prevent interference from that direction a party was sent to take Caversham Bridge and its redoubt, which was quickly achieved and the bridge broken down. The parliamentarian army did not surround Reading but posed a significant threat from the south and the west.

Making use of the gathering darkness and substantial surviving hedges which Aston had failed to remove, Essex was able to begin his entrenchments a lot closer to the walls than he had expected. With Skippon's men mounting guard, 30 soldiers from each newly-arrived regiment were detailed to dig works and build artillery platforms. Consequently by the morning they had a battery erected for the 'Great Ordinance' which was able to open fire on the royalist fortifications. Throughout the night more of Essex's troops arrived, taking shelter behind the hedges, whilst the lord general himself set up his headquarters at Southcote in the fortified manor house of Sir John Blagrove.

Essex's next move was to send a trumpeter to Aston to demand the surrender of the town or, failing that, to allow all the women and children to leave in safety. Aston sent back a very defiant refusal to both. With the return of the trumpeter with this news Essex called a council to discuss plans. After some debate it was decided not to launch an immediate assault which might be costly, nor to bombard the town indiscriminately which could kill many of the civilian population, but to concentrate fire upon the defences and thus carry the town 'by Gun and Spade'.[20] The battery of guns re-commenced firing and continued relentlessly for several days. Local legend has it that the guns brought down the tower of the church of St. Giles where Aston had placed a light gun. Under the cover of the bombardment Essex advanced more of his Foot into the fields from where they too began firing on the soldiers who lined the works. However, Essex then needed to make a decision concerning how he would go about taking the town after 'softening it up'. Given that Aston would not surrender, there was only one choice – he had to storm once a practical breach had been made. To stop Aston concentrating his forces in the western part of the town, where the likely assault would be delivered, Essex set about digging trenches in lines of contravallation and putting a stranglehold on all communications as well as showing the garrison it was surrounded and under pressure from all sides. Adding to his reluctance to launch an immediate assault it is not unreasonable to suggest that he was also aware of the high percentage of newly-raised regiments and newly-recruited replacements in his army. He delegated the construction of the trench works to the capable hands of Philip Skippon.

Skippon began his digging almost immediately and work progressed well. However, as they neared the walls they came under musket fire. In the west the royalists had omitted to hack down and grub out the hedges, so the workmen had cover, but in the east there was none. They improvised a degree

19 Tracts, Reading Reference Library. *A True Relation …*

20 TT. E. 99. (2).

of protection by setting fire to several farm buildings and worked hidden by the smoke. The speed at which these trenches were dug indicates that the ground was soft and the work reasonably easy. With the men now in the cover of their own trenches the siege works soon moved forward including erecting more batteries closer to the walls. There was a setback however, when a powder barrel exploded near one of the siege guns; its blast killed four men and seriously wounded about a dozen others, including Captain St John of the Lord General's Regiment of Foot.

For a detailed account of the siege and the progress made by Essex and Skippon we refer the reader to: Barres-Baker, M. C., *The Siege of Reading, April 1643* (Ottawa, eBooksLib, 1957).

After bombarding all day Sunday, on Monday 17 April Essex sent another demand for surrender. Aston agreed to hand over the town if he and his men were permitted to march out unmolested to rejoin the king in Oxford. Essex refused as he had come 'for the men, not for the town barely'.[21] Barres-Baker points out these words were also attributed to Lord Grey, but they do explain Essex's reason for rejecting the offer; to permit the reinforcement of the Oxford Garrison was not part of his long-term strategy.

On 17 April Essex also sent a force to seize Mapledurham House, a few miles up the road to Oxford and the home of Sir Charles Blount who was a friend of Aston's. Parliament sequestered the property. However, it was not all plain sailing as the parliamentarian medical staff soon had to deal with an outbreak of typhus in their camp, which was probably caused by poor sanitation provision and the contamination of drinking water. One source states that it was contracted from townspeople who fled Reading, but such outbreaks are usually associated with unregulated and unhygienic, crowded encampments. Gradually the sick toll mounted, followed by an alarming number of deaths. Moreover, an additional problem Essex faced was that the king had sanctioned financial inducements be made to any parliamentarian soldier who deserted and went over. No records of this being successful have been found but it must have persuaded some men to leave the attacking army, especially as Parliament was not sending the men's pay as they had agreed to do.

What did arrive over the next two days however, were more men. Lord Grey of Wark brought in an additional 4-5,000 men from the Army of the Eastern Association; three regiments of Foot, six troops of Horse, two of dragoons and three guns. With this reinforcement Essex was able to complete his surrounding of the town. There was also a rumour in Reading that the countrymen of Berkshire were flocking to Essex's colours but this appears to have been false.

The king also tried to send some help to the beleaguered Aston which he did on 18 April, but the small force seen on the hills overlooking Reading were only a diversion, for the royalists managed to get some aid into the town by moving east up the Thames to Sonning. There they secured several large boats by which means some 600 musketeers and a quantity of powder and ball were sent by river to the besieged garrison, gaining access by sailing

21 John Vicars, *Magnalia Dei Anglicana or England's Parliamentary Chronicle* (1646), TT. E. 247 (32).

upstream on the Thames then striking south up the Kennet and landing near Abbey Bridge where they had the protection of two small redoubts. To prevent a recurrence of this clever move, Essex had a further battery constructed on the river bank that could play upon the Thames at close range and blow any boat daring again to attempt a passage into the town out of the water. The river was now sealed off. This 'ownership' of the river also helped alleviate the camp fever problem as Essex had many of the sick taken back to London by barge where they could be cared for. This took some of the strain off his medical teams and meant that the soldiers no longer had to witness mass burials of their comrades.

All through these events the siege guns did not stop firing. Aston is thought to have actually sent word that he was again ready to consider surrender on Essex's terms, but after his arrogant refusal of the initial demand which Essex saw as the direct cause of his army now suffering from disease, the lord general was in no mood to agree to treat. Then Aston fell victim to the siege guns. He was incapacitated by a severe wound to the head caused by a piece of flying tile and took to his bed, and command devolved upon Colonel Richard Fielding.[22] Moreover, the bombardment grew heavier and more devastating. On Thursday 20 April two regiments of Foot under the command of Colonel Bulstrode and five troops of Horse under Major Gunter provided support and cover to the artillerymen and their labourers as they hauled some guns even nearer to the walls. By Friday 21 April they were 'within pistoll shot' of the Gallows Field bulwarks.[23] However, before he was struck down Aston had sent a message to the king asking that a relief force be sent, and this request was repeated by Fielding stating that he could not be expected to hold out alone but could only manage a week at the most. On 22 April, after the defences of Reading had suffered six days of almost continual bombardment the king despatched a messenger, a man called Flower who was a servant to Sir Lewis Dyve, bringing news of a proposed surprise relief. Flower got into Reading by swimming the Thames, but was intercepted on his way back, being hauled out of the water by a bluecoat drummer. He was imprisoned with another royalist agent charged with plotting to blow up one of Essex's magazines and when questioned, presumably it was 'hard questioning', he revealed the king's plans.[24] Essex now knew of the intended relief force and sent out, over the now-repaired Caversham Bridge a strong detachment of Horse which charged the approaching 2,500 royalist Horse then, supported by musketeers from Barclay's and Holborne's Regiments, beat them off.

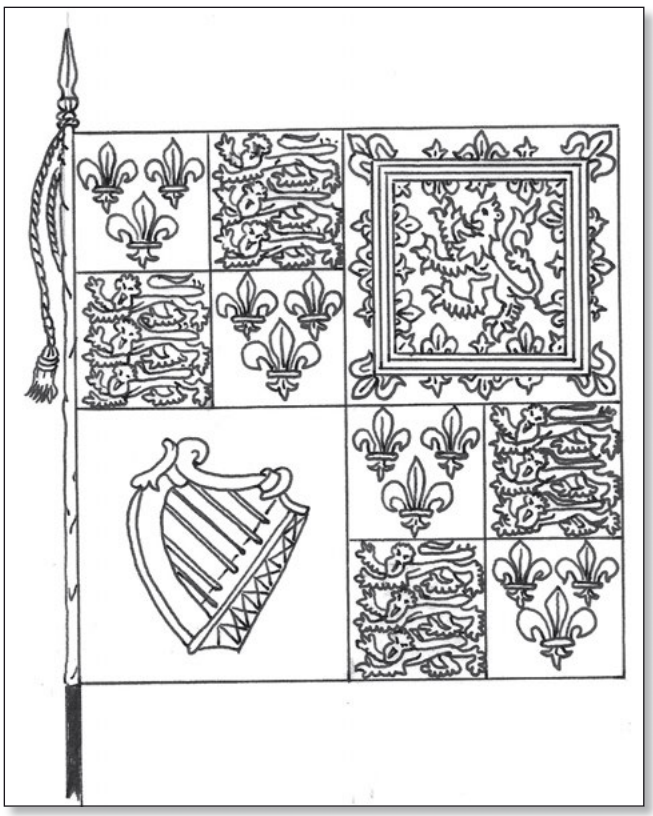
During 24 May Fielding tried a last minute sortie against part of the besiegers' lines held by Chomley's Regiment, but after some bitter fighting it was driven back into Reading.

Following these two successes, during the evening of 24 May, Essex sent out Middleton's and Meldrum's Horse along with four companies of dragoons to beat up whatever royalist billets they could locate. At Dorchester-on-Thames

22 Young, P. & Norman, T. (eds.), op. cit., p.48.

23 Disbury, D., op.cit. p.46.

24 By alleging that he was plotting sabotage he could be charged with a hanging offence whereas carrying a message was not. It must have added to the pressure to talk.



The Banner Royal, drawing by Alan Turton. (Turton Collection)

they bumped into a party of a few hundred royalist Horse and the King's Lifeguard Regiment of Foot. Taken by surprise, the royalist Horse charged but were soon put into disarray and finally driven from the town in rout. This was a shock to the royalists as their number included the king's own troop! A royal colour was captured and a number of troopers killed and taken. The rout communicated to the infantry and most of the King's Guard also took to their heels although several small determined parties defied their attackers and fought it out in desperate last stand actions. They were mostly all wiped out. One man who hid and then escaped did so carrying a treasured possession – the king's own standard which had been briefly captured at Edgehill now missed being taken more permanently. After their surprising success, the parliamentarian Horse then reordered, about faced and rode back to Reading with their trophies.[25]

News of the raid lowered the morale of the king's main relief force which was now gathering at Wallingford where Charles had brought together as large a force as could be spared from Oxford and its surrounding garrisons. He mustered nine infantry regiments, although they were numerically quite weak, between 40 and 53 cavalry troops, and an impressive train of artillery. Joined by Prince Rupert, fresh from his victory at Lichfield, the force set out early on the morning of 25 April and marched south east in two separate columns until, undetected by Essex's scouts, they rendezvoused in Caversham Park a mile or so from the bridge. But, they had arrived on the very day that Fielding hoisted a white flag of surrender over Reading. What prompted him to do so is a mystery, having told his king he could last a week. Perhaps it was orders of the Army Council earlier in the year, or perhaps it was the sight of the captured royal colour and believing the relief force had been defeated thought that without aid he was unable to continue sustaining the siege, [26] especially as he had only 18 barrels of powder left.

However, just as Essex and his staff prepared to move forward to begin the surrender negotiations, the king and his relief force arrived. The royalist guns opened fire but bad weather made them relatively ineffective. Between 9.00 am and 10.00 am about 1,000 Foot led by Rupert and Sir Lewis Dyve's Regiment poured down from the Oxfordshire hills towards Caversham Bridge. Although not expecting an attack Essex had stationed

25 Tracts, Reading Reference Library. *Another Happy Victory …*

26 It is uncertain why Fielding should believe this captured colour was of greater significance than having been lost by one company or one troop.

six companies of Colonel Barclay's Regiment to guard the bridge and so they were fortuitously in position to receive it when it came.[27] Bitter fighting took place on the north side of the bridge but even if this fell, Essex had contrived, commented royalist Captain John Gwyn, to,

> … put the broad deep river of Thames between them, and so confine his [the king's] army to march over a narrow straight pass (not much bigger than a sally port) of an old wooden bridge, which was within cannon shot of the enemy's works and over which there they could not march five, or six at the most, in a breast, and would have taken the remainder of the day to do it.[28]

Being densely packed on its narrow roadway the royal troops would have come under devastating fire. The ideal thing to have happened for the royalists was for the garrison to sally out and hit Essex's men in the rear. However, having proclaimed the garrison's surrender, and indeed actually negotiated its terms during the fighting, this expected sally from Fielding never came and gradually the momentum of the attack stalled.

> … the enemy raised a breast-work and a battery against the bridge-end, and the commanded party, or forlorn hope of the King's army, desperately attempted to force over the bridge against the cannon's mouth, and great bodies of small shot, which cut them off as fast as they came.[29]

Amid foul weather, the fight went on for over an hour. Barclay's men were fortunate in that the cold east wind and driving rain was to their backs whilst the royalists had to fight in its teeth, often having powder blown from their pans and icy rain run down their barrels turning their charges to sludge. Nevertheless such was the pressure they maintained that Barclay's men must have been heartily glad to be reinforced by Roberts' Regiment.

The defence of Caversham was proving successful and to keep Fielding assured of the perilous nature of his position Essex had a large siege gun fire three times at one of their prominent forts. The royalists' attempt on the bridge came to a halt and was then repulsed. Being the attacker assaulting a fortified position, royalist losses were significant; parliamentarian accounts refer to some 200 to 300.[30] Reluctantly they withdrew back up the hillside pursued by the now victorious parliamentarians giving volleys as they went, until the whole engagement petered out. Caversham Bridge had been a remarkable feat of arms for two regiments of Essex's army, for, although obviously a propaganda lie, they claimed only three dead and ten badly wounded. Barclay himself was lightly wounded.

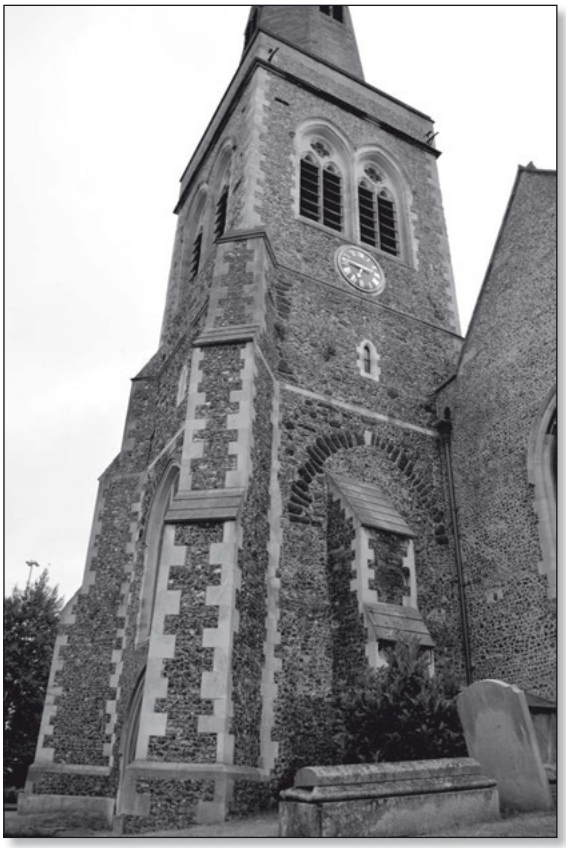
Having gained and maintained the ascendency but wary of the large relief force still outside Reading, Essex wrote to Parliament and assured them of his expectation of overall success. His letter, dated 24 April 1643

27 Lords Journals, Vol.IV. 17. It is thought that the relief revealed by Flower was the earlier all-Horse attempt seen off earlier, so this one was indeed unexpected.

28 Young, P. & Norman, T. (eds.), op.cit., p.50. Seemingly from Gwyn's 'narrow straight pass … of an old wooden bridge'.

29 *Ibid.*

30 Most likely an exaggeration.



St. Giles Church, Reading. (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

not only relates the state of affairs but reinforces the care he took with his soldiers' lives. 'I am very loath to venture the Souldiers upon such Works, being probably that many may be lost in storming'. However, even in this communication he could not resist a criticism of Waller. 'Sir William Waller doth not come to me, according to my Expectation and Order, though Prince Maurice be come … so that I have now all the King's forces to deal with … without the Assistance which I had Reason to look for'.[31]

Fielding was permitted by Essex to ride out of Reading and meet the king and tell him of the favourable surrender terms proffered, to which the king reluctantly agreed. The assault on the bridge had cost him about 200 dead and many more wounded, so disconsolately he gave orders for the relief force to retire to Oxford whilst Fielding rode back into Reading to organise his garrison's departure. Fielding's relationship with Essex was interesting as they seem to have remained on amicable terms throughout the siege. Fielding's brother, the earl of Denbigh, was a parliamentarian senior officer who had fought under Essex at Edgehill and Captain John Gwyn states he had evidence of clandestine meetings between the two before the surrender was announced.[32]

The capitulation document was signed on 26 April and the royal garrison of Reading marched out over Caversham Bridge on the Oxford road the following day. Although ragged and thin, like 'a congregation of hedge-rogues', they did so with full honours of war, Essex allowing them to march with colours and cornets flying, drums beating and trumpets sounding. They were permitted wagons, several magnanimously lent by Essex, to carry their wounded, personal belongings and stores for their march. They were also followed by a mass of camp followers including children. Each man was allowed to retain his sword and the musketeers marched with lighted match as a mark of respect and honour towards a valiant enemy. However, it did not go smoothly. Their route was via the gate at Grey Friars Corner on the way to Caversham Bridge, the road to Oxford and safety. Essex had his men lined up ready to march into the town after the royalists had left and to take possession of it in the name of Parliament. But before Essex could formally enter the town his soldiers began jeering and insulting their beaten foes. An unsubstantiated accusation says that the royalists were trying to sneak out more arms than they were entitled to carry under the terms of the surrender. Angry exchanges followed and the parliamentarian officers were powerless to stop acts of violence breaking out. With both sides being armed, a large ugly

31 Bod. Tanner Ms., Volume 62, folio 76.
32 *Ibid*, p.49.

brawl ensued, the royalists' wagons were plundered, several nearby houses broken into and stripped, particularly of alcohol. Royalist riders were sent up the Oxford Road and two regiments in the relief force began retracing their steps in the hope of preventing a massacre. However, with great restraint royalist officers calmed their own men, and by their parliamentarian counterparts following their example the two sides drew apart. This debacle was used the following year by the royalists as an excuse for the bad treatment given to Essex's surrendered infantry at Lostwithiel. After the royalists made a disordered scramble up the Oxford Road, the parliamentarian soldiers and their violence spilled into the town. Gone was the welcome reception Essex had envisaged as townsfolk barricaded their houses and the soldiers tried to force entry into them. Although not substantiated, Essex is believed to have ridden amongst his men laying about them with the flat of his sword.

This disorder was certainly not a propaganda invention, as it was reported by both sides, but unfortunately the extent of this breakdown in discipline varies according to the sympathies of the authors of the accounts. Contemporary royalists and even modern authors who have read their versions, say the parliamentarian troops rioted out of control as taverns were plundered and their contents consumed, houses were sacked and other atrocious acts meted out to the citizens, especially those with known royalist sympathies. Parliamentarians admit it happened, blaming malcontents and a few bad characters, and tend to say it was over fairly quickly, with Essex and the officers getting the men back under control in a short time. It was probably somewhere between the two views. There undoubtedly was a lack of discipline which was lamentable but Essex prevented a sack by promising the men twelve shillings each in lieu of plunder if they would return to order and refrain from criminal damage and robbery. This they did, and even attended church services on 30 April although the townspeople were understandably very wary of them. A party of civic dignitaries made a present of several diamond rings and sets of clothes to Essex.[33] Over the following few days Essex and his officers were kept busy not only with maintaining disciple among their own men bent on seeking plunder, but also restraining vigilante groups of pro-Parliament extremists both among his own men and Reading civilians from hunting out royalist sympathisers.[34]

If the citizenry suffered badly and it is by no means certain what proportion of them did, in Essex's defence it must be mentioned that Aston denied the garrison and townspeople the right of merciful treatment by refusing Essex's first call to surrender. Although the implications of a siege situation were much more complicated, it could be construed that the accepted practice of the period was that should a place surrender without the besiegers having to make an attack then nobody, soldier or civilian would be harmed and the townsfolk's property would be inviolate. However should the call to hand over the town be refused, making it necessary for the besiegers to bombard or storm, then everything was hazarded which not only meant the plundering of stores and houses but included a general sack even to the extent

33 It has been inferred that these had been stripped from dead royal officers.

34 High on their lists were those who had informed on Parliament sympathisers to Aston who had inflicted double taxation on them as punishment.

of razing the town to the ground. All the town's defences could be destroyed including its corporation-funded walls, and all military senior officers and town dignitaries could be summarily executed. As a reward for time spent in trenches or having to undertake a dangerous storm, the victorious army were permitted to pillage and ravish the town and its people committing such outrageous acts as it wished. Very few commanders would contemplate restraining their men from such excesses. It was the predetermined outcome of a siege that met with resistance and such a rule of war meant the civilian population would put pressure on any governor to agree to the initial surrender. Aston did not agree and if Reading suffered, the fault lies at his door. Essex's agreement to allow the garrison to march out with honours was both fair and quite usual although the attacks on the royalists as they did so were unjustifiable. It could be argued that had they remained under control, any plundering of Reading would not have taken place, yet Essex's bribing of his men to refrain from exercising their rights to total excess show a humane side to his character which is often forgotten. It also illustrates that he could also be a wise strategist as both he and Parliament needed an intact and well-disposed Reading as a forward base if they were to make any future attempt on Oxford.

Gwyn criticises Essex's decision to hold the bridge against the relief force, in that he says that if he had more military skill he could have allowed the royal army to cross the Thames. He could then have inflicted many more casualties on them by deploying a larger portion of his Foot and artillery in such a formation as to bring more fire upon a constricted bridge-head.[35] This sounds good in theory and made with the luxury of hindsight but it would have been extremely risky to give up the defensive river line and the bridge on a gamble with troops that were in the main not tried and tested. There was also still the risk that Fielding would renege on his surrender or his men ignore him and attack Essex in the rear.

Essex's conduct of the siege was more than competent. He took Henley as a forward base for a feinted eastern attack whilst intending to appear from the west. He had repaired bridges as he advanced so as to have an expedient means of retreat should he suffer a reverse and his excellent intelligence coordinators supplied him with sufficient detail to enable him to make a daring plan of attack that ignored the most hazardous approach. Having arrived from an unexpected direction he took his time and built up his force and their transports slowly. These operations were apt and systematic as he first took Caversham Bridge which was the essential key to his whole plan of attack. He realised the danger in making a foolhardy assault on the defences with many untried troops and steadily encircled the place, all the time maintaining a continuous bombardment from siege guns. He had trenches dug under cover and later ordered guns moved forward to increase the pressure on the garrison. He sent out parties to raid local royalist enclaves and kept up patrols to forestall any surprise attack, and he also had a system in place by which entrances to the town were watched and any agents picked up and dealt with. He responded with alacrity to the threat of relief from Oxford meanwhile offering acceptable terms to the royalist commander to

35 *Ibid*, p.51.

quit the place. He also made provision for dealing as best he could with the outbreak of disease and the care of his men. Finally he showed compassion to the people of Reading by not using his heavy mortars against the town because of the indiscriminate damage they would cause and doing what he could, even at personal risk to prevent them being sacked and looted by his victorious troops. Overall it was an impressive record.

There is however, a certain irony concerning the siege of Reading in that Clarendon notes that the royalist Army Council sitting in Oxford at the time of Aston's installation had agreed to hold the town until April 1643 when it would be abandoned and its defences slighted. The garrison was then to be used to reinforce a field army. This may of course be Clarendon minimising the significance of its loss; which is perhaps reinforced by the attempts made by the king to relieve it during the very month it was to be vacated. However, it is worth pondering if Aston exceeded his instructions by refusing to surrender and did Fielding also know of these plans when he refused to sally out?

Essex's success can also be measured in the impact of the capture of Reading had upon royalist morale. In Oxford it caused near panic and the Army Council began making plans for a rapid withdrawal to the north in order to link up with the Earl of Newcastle's army. Similarly the royalist garrison at Wallingford, having 'more than a panicke of fear upon them' were reported to have made provision to destroy their own works around the town, reduce their garrison by sending many to Oxford and withdraw the rest into the castle.[36] It would appear that without striking at them Essex had broken their will to continue the fight. It can only be imagined with what greater success he would have met if he had pushed on to Oxford.

However, the final twist in the tale came in June 1643 when, his army debilitated by disease, Essex himself vacated Reading and left it for the royalists to re-enter without any opposition.

36 E.100. (7): Anon, *Mercurius Bellicus. The fourth Intelligence from Reading. Dated from His Excellency his Quarters in Reading, April the last, at 5 a clock at night. Wherein is the certain Relation of the taking of Hereford by Sir William Waller.* London: Printed for Samuel Gellibrand, May 1 1643.

6

The Gloucester Campaign, Late Summer 1643

Essex does not appear to have made much use of the strategic gain of taking Reading even though there was an expectation fed by some men in Parliament that he should advance and attack Oxford, especially among the pro-war faction. However the lord general had several problems. One was the fact that his army was not up to strength and was much smaller than people generally believed. It was said he allowed 30,000 men to be wasted in sloth and idleness, yet royalist spies reported it to be nearer 19,000 and that was after he had scoured the local garrisons for troops. Wark's men had returned to the Eastern Association so Essex was back to relying upon his own army. He had had some success in rebuilding the regiments badly mauled at Edgehill but, as mentioned earlier, during the siege of Reading that scourge of all commanders in the field, a debilitating disease, struck Essex's army in early summer 1643.

In military parlance a whole variety of diseases were grouped together under the general name of 'camp fever' but the particular one which hit Essex's men is now believed to have been typhus. Both during and after the siege his men died in large numbers and even royalist intelligence accounts state that many lay in their quarters unable to move whilst several hundred were transported daily in barges back to London. The army was in dire straits and whilst this sickness raged, Essex could not follow up his victory or make any strategic moves to capitalise on his success. Nor indeed could he make any attempt to aid Waller against Hopton.[1]

Moreover, he was desperately short of horses and army morale was far from good. Not only was there a malaise born of the epidemic but also a general disaffection about the hamstrung situation in which the men found themselves. There was also a general discontent over Essex's refusal to allow the men to sack and pillage Reading. Parliament fuelled this resentment not only by withholding the twelve shillings per man he had promised

1 The fact that the Reading garrison had carried a 'plague' with them to Oxford which was taking its toll in the city, would further have discouraged Essex from going there, especially with troops already weakened by one disease, and probably frightened by exposure to yet another.

them in lieu of plunder, but their basic pay was also late. Not backing Essex's promise of a bounty to forego pillage undermined his authority and led the men to think their commander untrustworthy. To add to his problems many disgruntled men deserted, driven by fear of disease, poverty and a scarcity of provisions. Even had the army been fit enough to undertake offensive actions, its unwillingness to obey orders would have made it unlikely they would have done so with any enthusiasm.

John Hampden, engraving by S. Freeman. (Turton Collection)

Yet Essex did get them to move. In early June 1643 and with a supreme effort, he had his men shift quarters from disease-ridden Reading to somewhere different and presumably much healthier; he even got them to move closer to Oxford, but it was a weary and dispirited army that marched to Thame. It might have been a wise move to occupy fresh quarters but the royalists saw the move from Reading to Thame as posing an increased threat to their capital – a view substantiated when Essex then marshalled enough fit men to try to stage a hook around the north of Oxford. It is remarkable that given all the trials and tribulations the army suffered that they were still willing and indeed able to respond to his orders – albeit unenthusiastically. This was not a very high profile event but it is an indication of what an inspirational commander he was and far from the achievement of the lacklustre dullard described by some historians.

Regrettably circumstances militated against Essex developing this manoeuvre around the north of the royalist capital. Rupert sortied out to threaten Thame which meant Essex had to fall back to protect both his depot and his recovering sick soldiers. Further bad news reached him. John Hampden his close friend and advisor, and indeed his likely successor, was badly wounded in a battle fought at Chalgrove Field and died on 24 June. The Battle of Chalgrove lies outside the remit of this work but as it was fought by units of Essex's army it is well worth studying. There is currently a serious re-evaluation of the action and where it took place, and those interested should refer to the recent work of Derek and Gill Lester.[2] They make a most convincing argument that rather than simply a large skirmish famed for the death of Hampden, it should now be seen as a battle with wide-reaching implications for Essex's army. This is because the number of officers killed and captured, including 'thirteen captains and eighteen more men of note murdered in Oxford gaol', were a dramatic and influential loss to Essex's command and control and seriously debilitated Essex's army for the rest of its existence. [3]

Hampden had been a staunch parliamentarian and effective military leader, and his loss must have been both a professional and personal blow

2 Lester, D & G., 'The Military and Political Importance of the Battle of Chalgrove. (1643)' *Oxoniensia* journal of Oxfordshire Architectural and Historical Society, LXXX, 2015, pp. 27-39.

3 TT. E. 96. *The Parliament Scoute Tuesday 20 June to Tuesday 27 June 1643.*

to Essex as he had placed a lot of faith in his friend's abilities and advice. Moreover he still received forwarded reports of the political moves made against him and letters complaining of his lack of aggression in the Thames Valley. He had tried, but was powerless to attempt more.

Amid these trials, Essex also had news that Rupert had left Oxford on 30 June with a force of cavalry, and after some prodigious organisational feats Essex followed him, shifting his army from Thame to Great Brickhill in Buckinghamshire. To many this appeared to be a withdrawal from proximity to Oxford but Essex was endeavouring to position his army in such a way that it could both counter Rupert and intercept the great supply column, called the Queen's Convoy, which was known to be coming south from the north of the country.[4] From his new camp Essex wrote increasingly critical and bitter letters to Parliament and by early July each side was making threats and demands. Essex wanted horses sent to his army immediately and intimated that without them his men could do nothing about the royalist cavalry. He also unwisely openly supported moves being made by the peace faction to seek negotiations with the king. He even suggested a sort of decisive battle scenario, like a massive dual to resolve the war with both king and Parliament agreeing to accept the decision. This was not only a somewhat silly idea but it was also unpopular with all but the most entrenched anti-war members; even Pym disapproved. London broadsheets accused him of undermining the Cause, and Parliament responded with demands that he submit all his military plans to them for approval. They obviously did not trust him.[5]

The Queen's Convoy successfully avoided Essex and entered Oxford thus heaping even more criticism on his already bowed head. However, before leaping to conclusions regarding Essex's or his army's competence it might be wise to enquire how on a practical level, if they were drastically short of horses, were they to scout or seek out the convoy, let along strike at it. Without his 'eyes and ears' and lacking a powerful mobile strike force it is no wonder the convoy got through. It should also be remembered, as Essex pointed out to his critics, that Cromwell and Grey had also been ordered to stop the Queen's Convoy and they too had failed.

Although sickness in his army plus the shortage of horses and other supplies were the underlying factors behind this inability to undertake major offensive measures during the summer of 1643, Essex's political enemies accused him of deliberate inactivity. Much was made of an accusation that he wilfully allowed Waller to fail in his Western campaign so as to blight his chances of succeeding him as lord general.[6] However much the pro-Waller camp argue that Essex should have prevented Wilmot and his cavalry from

4 Queen Henrietta Maria had landed in the north with a large amount of weapons, ammunition and other provisions with which she intended to resupply the king's army in Oxford. To escort this convoy was the reason Rupert had left the city and why Essex tried to follow him.

5 This was not an entirely new notion. It had been thought before Edgehill that one big battle would be enough to settle the whole war. Essex was merely repeating that idea in a different context, but it was enough to raise hackles and engender criticism.

6 With Hampden dead, Waller, who was also a popular Parliamentarian hero and enjoying more military success than Essex, was seen as the champion of the pro-war faction who advocated that he replaced Essex as soon as possible.

leaving Oxford to go to the relief of Devizes, it cannot mitigate the fact that Waller was soundly beaten at Roundway Down in July 1643 by a royalist army half the size of his own and lacking in Foot and artillery.[7]

During this period of enforced inactivity, unlike the parliamentarians, the royalist Council of War capitalised on their successes which culminated in Roundway, by mopping up centres of resistance in preparation for launching a major attack upon London. Prince Rupert was despatched to seize Bristol whilst Rupert's brother Maurice was sent to Dorchester to eradicate all parliamentarian garrisons in Dorset.

Whilst the king enjoyed a series of victories, Parliament appeared to lurch from crisis to crisis amid an atmosphere of fear of plots. There was a rising in Kent and the London mob was fractious due to food shortages and taxes to finance the war. This time a new tax was levied to fund Henry Marten's radical pro-war group's move to create 'a godly army'. Marten's Army of the General Rising was to be based around the London Trained bands, thus depriving Essex of the London regiments in his force and removing his reserves from his command. Parliament agreed to this army's formation, and much to Essex's chagrin gave command of it to Waller, who was also charged with retaking the West Country.

June and July were not good months for Parliament. They first had to face the defeat at Adwalton Moor and then the loss of Hampden at Chalgrove. Then came the defeat of Waller at Roundway Down followed by the surrender of Bristol. Amid the gloom Essex tried to re-establish his rapport with Pym, but Parliament was wracked by internecine bickering and Essex's standing was continually threatened. Moreover there were also moves afoot to negotiate the entry of the Scots into the conflict which further divided those managing the war on Parliament's behalf.

Meanwhile the king's council concentrated upon military activities in the southern Welsh Marches so as to open a corridor for future royalist reinforcements and supplies from Wales. The main thrust of their strategy was against Gloucester and its bridge across the Severn because they sat astride a major route into England for potential resources for the king. In fact the walled City of Gloucester dominated the Severn Valley and was also a beacon of resistance for the parliamentarian cause. In early August 1643, at the same time that Essex was wrangling with Parliament, various elements of the king's forces converged upon Gloucester and placed it under siege. It was a formidable gathering of the king's power. The momentous events of that siege and the decisions and orders of the city's commander Edward Massey are beyond the scope of this book but suffice it to say that the defence by both soldiers and citizens was dogged and courageous.[8]

Meanwhile Essex moved his headquarters and a significant portion of his army to Uxbridge, even closer to London, and although this stimulated even more criticism, yet another fresh encampment appears to have seen

7 Why this defeat came about will be argued in a forthcoming book on Roundway Down by Chris Scott.

8 Recommended reading: Atkin, M., & Laughlin, W., *Gloucester and the Civil War: A City under Siege* (Stroud, Sutton, 1992). Whiting, J.., *Gloucester Besieged:: The Story of a Roundhead City 1640-1660.* (Gloucester, City Museum & Art Gallery, 1975).

the dreadful bout of camp fever finally loosen its grip. By early August 1643 his army had recovered sufficiently to begin further operations. However, Essex again took the case of his army's condition to Parliament asking for reinforcements and supplies to make up deficiencies in numbers and stores. His negotiations with Parliament were made more complicated by his perennial military and political rivalry with Waller, but Essex exerted pressure in his own interests and those of his now comparatively meagre army. His force might have been small in number but having fought at Edgehill and taken Reading it was the most experienced army in the field, so Essex brought a strong hand to the negotiating table. The result of the delicate and even fractious debate was overshadowed by the news of the king's siege of Gloucester. For a long time Parliament considered that mere encouragement to hold out was all that was required to sustain the city's resistance, but gradually Gloucester began to be seen as a beleaguered bastion of Parliament's control and influence in the West. It was resolved that it had to be rescued, and whilst Waller's army was not yet ready, indeed it too had very real problems raising men, Essex was given the opportunity to redeem himself and his army by marching to Gloucester's relief.[9] However, this came at a substantial cost to Parliament in that Essex made seven specific demands which he required be met before he would willingly agree to march out. These were that:

1. He received sufficient money not only to pay all arrears owing to his men but also significant sums for inducing recruitment.
2. Each of his regiments received sufficient clothing to replace 1,000 uniforms.[10]
3. The army were sent 500 horses plus a further 200 per month to mount such recruits as were attracted.
4. Recruitment for any other army in the region must be halted until his army was up to strength.
5. Both Houses were to publish a vindication of his past actions and those of his officers.
6. He should be granted personal authority for the signing of all future commissions in any army raised by Parliament.
7. A public enquiry to be set up to examine why Waller was defeated at Roundway Down. [11]

Around 15 August Essex was consulted by Pym and Vane about whether he thought he should relieve Gloucester or take Oxford, or even Exeter. This meeting resolved that he should attempt Gloucester, but only upon the acceptance of his terms. The first six demands were met, but Parliament would

9 One account tells of only 300 men being raised for Waller's new army whilst the Venetian Ambassador was sarcastically scathing about the populace's professed zeal not translating into action.

10 This is most likely for the Foot and unfortunately there is no specific definition of 'uniform'.

11 Article 4 was a veiled attempted to thwart Waller's recruitment for the Army of the General Rising but article 6 meant that Waller's commission for his new army had to be signed by Essex before it could come into force. Obviously Essex refused to sign it, which served to exacerbate the quarrels. Article 7 was a of way ensuring Waller got the full blame for Roundway and further vindicating his own conduct.

John Pym, engraving by J. Houbraken. (Turton Collection)

not order the enquiry into Waller's defeat. However, Essex did manage to have Waller assigned to defending the capital in his absence thus putting a hold on his aspirations to lead his army into the West. In addition to his demands he also received a fulsome apology for criticism of his past inactivity and his name was cleared of all political slurs his enemies had smeared upon it. It would appear that he was still a popular figure among the people, so Essex had Parliament's trust in him publicly affirmed.

Although back in favour, manpower problems remained. Pay records for the Foot indicate that eleven of his original twenty regiments were available for the expedition to Gloucester but they were woefully under strength, mustering only some four and a half thousand whilst those still recovering from the bouts of disease reduced that total to around three thousand effectives. Four Foot regiments had been raised in London and Kent to supplement his army but they had been drawn away to deal with the unrest in the southeast. There were also three garrison regiments in the area, one each at Aylesbury, Chichester and Windsor but they could not be spared from their defensive role. Cavalry records show Essex had three and half thousand troopers spread across eight regiments of Horse and some dragoons, but a critical shortage of horses reduced them to about two and half thousand effectives.

Although lacking in the men to use them, the Tower arsenal, the manufacturing companies of the Minories and the powder mills at Rotherhithe ensured that Essex did have plenty of cannon, muskets and hand weapons as well as copious supplies of ammunition.[12] Money too was forthcoming as the City of London dug deep into its pockets, whilst horse round-ups and impressments yielded some success. Horses were needed not just for riding into action but for hauling the vast train of artillery and baggage any army required. To find sufficient stock to meet both needs was a huge undertaking. The parliamentary commissioners tried to convince Essex that he did not need to take as much artillery with him as he was planning, so as to reduce the demand for horses. However, Essex argued that he needed the guns, especially if he was to face a royal army sent to intercept him and that he intended to deliver a good number to Massey for Gloucester's future defence. So horses had to be found and so too did men.

12 SP.63/260/66 and SP.16/490 most of these weapons had come from the handing in of weapons by the Army of the North at the end of the wars with Scotland and large scale foreign imports.

It was resolved not to try and recruit new regiments but to reinforce those already in existence. Firstly orders were issued, saying that all those who had been in Essex's original army, and were able to do so should return to their colours. An allowance was made for those still deemed incapable through illness but imprisonment and execution for desertion was threatened for those thought fit who did not answer the call. Parliament then tried impressments, legislating that four thousand men drawn from London and the surrounding counties were to be conscripted. They managed to gather about a thousand by impressments, but they were carried out amid scenes of protest and even fighting.[13] Those already enlisted with Waller's new army claimed they could not be taken, which gave rise to false names being given to the listing agents, and as for the thousand men listed, very few reached the rendezvous area around Uxbridge, the majority slipping away and taking to their heels having also given counterfeit names and addresses upon their listing.

However, the returning men and some new recruits, possibly lured to serve by some judicious spending of the money Essex acquired for such purposes, managed to return the numbers to around the four and a half thousand mark; but he was still short of men. The solution had to be to draw upon the London Trained Bands. On 21 August the City of London Militia Committee agreed to a considerable contingent of the London Militia, both Trained Bands and Auxiliaries, to leave the capital and join his army. They agreed to send eight thousand men in six regiments of Foot plus one and half thousand Horse. Mainwaring's Regiment was withdrawn from the force serving in Kent suppressing the uprising, whilst the remaining five regiments to go were chosen by ballot.

The London Regiments ascribed to Essex's Army.

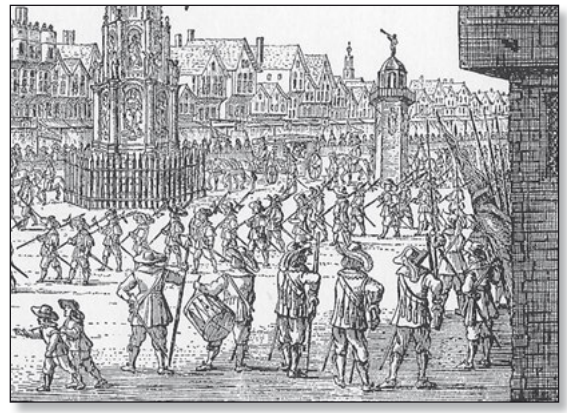
Randall Mainwaring's City of London Regiment
The Red Regiment, London Trained Bands
The Blue Regiment, London Trained Bands
The Red Regiment, City of London Auxiliaries
The Blue Regiment, City of London Auxiliaries
The Orange Regiment, City of London Auxiliaries .[14]

The men were apparently happy to go, like many soldiers having undergone the training and the endless hours of drill, they wanted to fight, and many were enthusiastic about Parliament's cause. Naturally there were men who did not wish to leave London and initially they were to have been exempted, but they were at first cajoled then threatened with court martial and even death to make them agree to march out with their comrades.

At this stage it is worth noting the quality of the London Militia troops. There is a perceived 'belief' that they were the best units Parliament had in

13 CSPV,1643. 13-16. The Venetian Ambassador reported that this fighting resulted in many objectors being injured as well as five being killed. Realising the liability these men represented and the tremendous policing effort required to keep them in the ranks, many these disaffected men were allowed to return to their homes by Essex. Impressments were a fatuous waste of time.

14 Peachey, S., & Turton, A., Old Robin's Foot (Leigh-on-Sea, Partizan Press, 1987), p. 10.



London Trained Bands at Cheapside, after an engraving of 1638. (Turton Collection)

its service but even though at the beginning of their campaigns they were probably better trained than most other regiments they were still inexperienced and raw where combat was concerned. One must not think that these were fully-functioning elite troops but they did have the proper weapons and knew how to handle them, if not in anger. There was peacetime training and much of it was geared to show and parade-ground performance. As with all large institutions different levels of proficiency must have existed and some companies or regiments probably trained more often or harder than others, especially in winter or bad weather. The trained bands had undergone a reorganisation in February 1642. The core of their company structure of around 200 men remained much the same as it was throughout the early 1600s but they were formed into six new regiments with four seven-company regiments being created: the Red, the Blue, the White and the Yellow; and a further two six-company regiments: the Green and the Orange. These colour-based names are thought to reflect the colours of their flags and not their coats.

Unlike the new regiments being raised for Essex's army these volunteer units did not have clothing issues so did not wear uniforms; they paid for and wore their own civilian clothes – some of the wealthier men perhaps stretching to buy a sleeveless buffcoat but these were not as universally popular as some re-enactment regiments would pretend. They also paid for their own weapons but had to meet the standards laid down in the *Direction for Musters* of 1638.

Finding sufficient numbers of mounted troops was a very different and more difficult task. There were no militia units of Horse similar to the London Trained Bands but there were several troops raised in London supposedly to defend the City. Two troops under Edmund Harvey, which in May 1643 had been listed as having 147 troopers between them, were serving in Kent, whilst Sir Samuel Luke's troop was still in London. By drawing in two independent troops from the surrounding regions and making Luke a colonel, the City managed to raise a single regiment of Horse and by also promoting Harvey to a colonelcy and instructing him to recruit he soon had a regiment of 386 in five troops. Parliament then cast about for other unattached or easily transferred units. They found three. One they withdrew from the force watching events in Kent, namely Richard Norton's Regiment of Horse. Norton's had come from Hampshire and he and Harvey had previously served together in that county. Another two regiments were acquired from the east midlands: Bazil Fielding, Earl of Denbigh's Regiment of Horse and Thomas, Lord Grey of Groby's Regiment of Horse.

Because the Kent uprising was settling down, three of Essex's Foot regiments helping quell the unrest were also ordered to rejoin his army.

Kent Regiments ascribed to Essex's Army

Sir Willam Brook's Regiment of Foot
William Springate's Regiment of Foot
Francis Thompson's Regiment of Foot [15]

Even with these augmentations, targets were not met and regiments were incomplete, but overall it was a remarkable achievement. The combined persuasive talents of Essex and Pym plus the enthusiastic support of the London Militia Committee and those who allocated Parliament's units to various forces meant that within about one week Essex had his army, at least on paper.

News of Essex's preparations to march reached the king who left the siege of Gloucester in order to meet with most of his senior military advisors in a two-day Council of War in Oxford.[16] Already concerned that they were not making as much progress as they wanted with the siege, the thought of a gathering relief force was worrying enough for the royalists to consider abandoning their attempt. However, the Council apparently concluded that Essex was too timid and cautious, and that even if he could be prevailed upon to act, he was incapable of mounting such an operation. The royalist propaganda broadsheet *Mercurius Aulicus* belittled his abilities and the rumours of the size of his army and denounced a claim that Essex had some 10,000 men. In reality, the Council of War in Oxford was alarmed, for they made even more improvements to the city defences and requested Hopton to send whatever men he could spare from Bristol to Gloucester, so as to retain a proportion of their own planned reinforcements of the siege. Moreover, the defences at Abingdon, and Wallingford were strengthened and a cavalry force under Wilmot was mustered around Banbury. After taking these decisions the king and his entourage returned to Gloucester, but not before issuing further orders that should Essex march, he was to be harried and delayed but not engaged in a pitched battle. Wilmot was instructed to wait about Banbury, then to retire before the enemy impeding their march wherever practicable.

The reasoning behind this decision not to offer battle is unclear but it undoubtedly suited Essex. His largely untried army at this early stage would probably not have been a match for the royalists in a set piece field action so he would have preferred to avoid fighting one. The strengthening of the defences both in and around Oxford meant the simple strategy of threatening the king's capital to oblige him to raise his siege and fall back to its protection was not an option; besides, such a move would not deliver the provisions, ammunition and heavy artillery to Massey. So the immediate military problem facing Essex was to select a route for his army to march to Gloucester. The problem was threefold. The first was Oxford; as the royal capital and base of military operations it was not only garrisoned-in-strength itself but was surrounded by garrisons in fortified places strategically positioned to

15 Although both Brook's and Springate's were Kentish regiments, the original recruiting area for Thompson's is unknown.

16 There was very little anyone could do about the activities of spies and gathering of intelligence by both sides.

control roads and bridges. As well as being part of a widespread and well-defended obstacle this 'ring of steel around Oxford' could send out parties to strike at any passing enemy column of soldiers or supply convoy and it was augmented by Wilmot's free-ranging mounted force. Obviously Essex had to go round it and keep sufficient distance from it to avoid interference from its forces. He could either go north of the obstacle via Aylesbury, Bicester and Stow-on-the-Wold or south of it via Newbury, Hungerford and Cirencester.

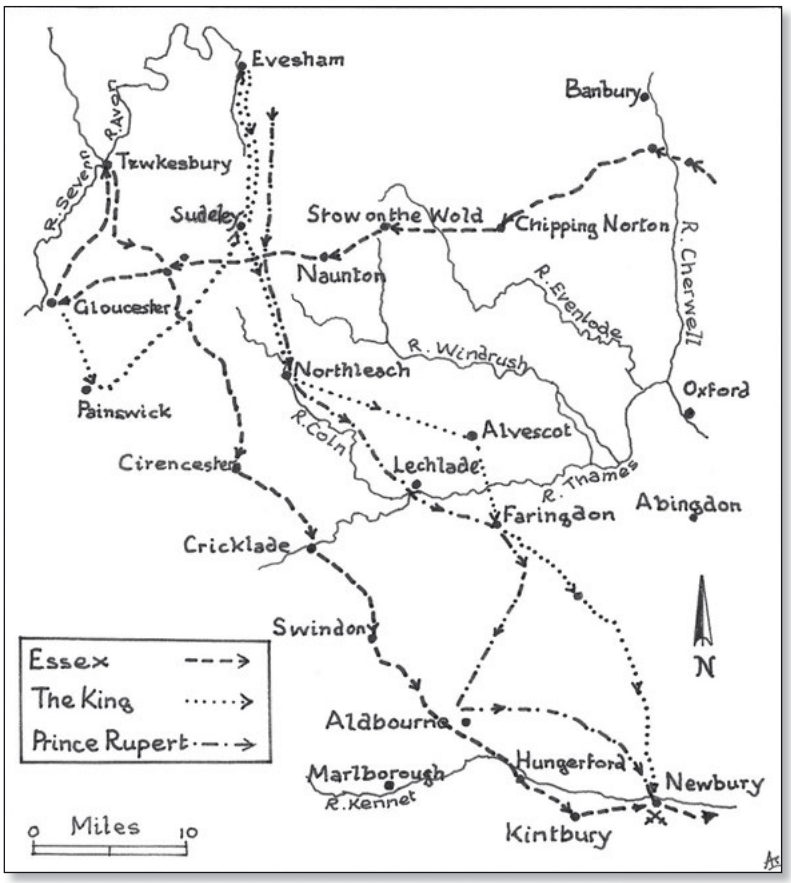
The second problem was the royalist cavalry. The parliamentarian Horse had been easily overrun by them at Powick, Edgehill and Roundway, and in innumerable skirmishes they had proved inferior especially to forces commanded by Rupert. The rolling downs of Berkshire and Wiltshire and the open uplands of the Cotswold was excellent cavalry country where Essex would be at a disadvantage, so the decision would involve which route provided the most enclosed terrain; infantry rather than cavalry country.

The third problem was that of available roads. Essex understood the need for decent roads to facilitate the movement of the whole plethora of transport known as the train. Again it would appear that Essex understood the demands of logistics. However the massive organisation task that he and Pym had orchestrated in London, of finding sufficient vehicles not only to service both his own army's needs and to carry the large amount of resources being taken to resupply Gloucester, would have been in vain if he did not choose a route over which they could travel.[17]

Essex chose to go via the northern loop. Not only could he put sufficient distance between himself and Oxford to dissuade any sortie but this route, although open in parts, led into the Severn Valley where there were hedges, ditches and villages; ground more suited to Foot than Horse. He aimed to approach Gloucester from the north via Stow-on-the-Wold then Prestbury and Cheltenham. Although still having to cross the Cotswolds, this chosen route meant he would spend the least amount of time in the open. There was open country between Banbury and Prestbury where the royalist Horse would have the upper hand but it was a risk he had to take. There was also another danger. The northern route ran perilously close to royalist Banbury but if he advanced upon it with his entire force then Wilmot, who commanded mostly cavalry, would be obliged to withdraw rather than engage a combined-arms army. He had defeated one under Waller at Roundway but that was nowhere near the size of this one under Essex.

As mentioned earlier, Essex's army was not mustered in one place nor was it guaranteed to muster quickly, and in full. He had had eleven foot regiments at the beginning of 1643 with paper strength of over 12,000, yet as mentioned before his actual number was more like 3,000, and the forces from London and Kent still had to join him. Similarly he had to wait for the additional cavalry units to come in to add to his nine regiments of Horse. Moreover there was the problem of loading the train and getting it moved

17 It is interesting to note that records show that the army did not carry much food for itself. They had some but to all intents and purposes they were to live off the land. Whether this was because of the shortage of draught horses or a deliberate decision by Essex to exert a degree of pressure upon his army to move quickly so as not to run out of provisions and go hungry, is not known.



Relief of Gloucester and 1st Newbury Campaign. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

from London to the Uxbridge area.

Nor did the political pressure on Essex cease entirely. Although in theory Waller and his army were ordered to defend London, there was a concern that it was insufficient in number to do so. Essex worried that he had under his charge not only Parliament's strike weapon of the most experienced soldiers and regiments, but that his reinforcements meant that the capital had been stripped of many of its volunteer regiments and thus weakened its defence. There was also a concern among his old adversaries in Parliament that the London Militia Committee had been bullied by Essex and Pym into allocating such a force to such a venture and that despite Waller, London could be deemed to have been left open to attack. If Essex lost this army in a military debacle it would be a disaster from which recovery would prove exceptionally difficult if not impossible.

Essex's and Waller's were not Parliament's only armies; it also had the Army of the Eastern Association commanded by Edward Montagu, 2nd Earl of Manchester, which was proving to be quite successful and there were other minor commands operating, such as Grey's. However, Essex's was a very precious army indeed. At this late hour, however, before beginning his march Essex still found time for political shenanigans concerning giving his official sanction to the appointment of some of Waller's choices for senior officers. Nor would he put his name to Waller's own commission and it took Pym himself to persuade him to sign the document.[18]

Finally having got everything as ready as he could and winning this latest spat with his old enemy, Essex ordered his army to march. The London Trained Bands having furthest to go had already left London. On 23 August, according to Sgt. Henry Foster's memoirs the Red Regiment had assembled

18 Even then he would not write Waller's name into the commission. He left it blank so that Parliament had to instruct a clerk to insert the general's name. Although issued under Essex's signature he could still claim he had not signed Waller's commission.

on the Artillery Ground and made a night march to Brentford.[19] The other trained bands similarly marched out of the City and took a couple of days to reach Uxbridge where they met with some of Essex's men on 26 August. That day the majority of Essex's original army from the Uxbridge/Colnbrook area began their march northwest to Beaconsfield. Most of the London regiments met up on 27 August at Chesham and both forces, Essex's and the Londoners, united in the Aylesbury/Bierton area over 28 to 30 August.[20] Meanwhile, not far away to the southwest, Harvey and the force from the southeast advanced from Wokingham, whilst the east midlands Horse were heading for Bicester.

These marches were not conducted in huge columns of men but dispersed wherever roads would allow vehicles to move. Foot and Horse took to the fields and open countryside where possible which also facilitated a degree of living off the land. Passing armies are not known for their kindly treatment of country folk nor for their ready-payment for goods requisitioned but Foster relates that his regiment had plenty of beer![21]

At Bierton church Essex oversaw an issue of clothing to his own regiments.[22] Records state that 4,260 pairs of shoes were handed out which might give an indication of how many men were actually in his eleven regiments of Foot but it might also be that only those whose shoes were beyond repair received new ones; quartermasters have never been generous. Neither were any shirts distributed although they had them and the men must have had need of them. This was probably because only 1700 had been supplied, which was not enough; so rather than give rise to recriminations or accusations about favouritism and rekindling discontent, Essex decided to withhold them. After the clothing issue the army pressed on via Waddeston to camp in the area of Grendon Underwood on 30 August, and the next day bivouacked in and around Bicester, most of the Horse was in Bicester itself whilst Essex's infantry were at Preston Bissett, and the Londoners around Stratton Audley.

The next day, 31 August, Harvey arrived with the two regiments of southeast Horse, his own and Norton's, as well as Mainwaring's, Brook's, Springate's and Thompson's infantry regiments. However, their march had not been without incident, having been attacked on 30 August south of Thame by Wilmot and his cavalry. They lost five troopers captured and some killed from their advance guard, and Wilmot sent news of their march and estimated strength to the royalist intelligence gatherers. Wilmot was also active in harassing Essex's main army. Troops from Essex's Lifeguard of Horse, under Captain Robert Hammond, had clashed with Wilmot's men in the streets of Bicester before the main army arrived, and drove them out, only to be thwarted by the appearance of a larger force some two miles beyond the town. They duly called up reinforcements including the rest of the Lifeguard and John Dalbier's Regiment of Horse, and caused the enemy to retire. Further parliamentarian cavalry arrived at Baynard's Green,

19 TT: E. 69. (15): Foster, Sergeant Henry, *A True and Exact Relation of the Marchings of the Two Regiments of the Trained Bands of the City of London.*(1644).

20 The London regiments were encamped around Aston Clinton.

21 Foster, op.cit.

22 The London regiments had their own clothes so had no need of an issue.

northeast of Bicester, on 1 September when Lord Grey brought in his and the Earl of Denbigh's regiments, which completed Essex's total force.

Now with as many units as he was going to assemble, one of the first things Essex as a wise commander did was to set up his Council of War and draw up his army in battle formation.[23] This he did at Baynard's Green and it was done so that each regimental officer knew where his unit was to be positioned when the orders came to deploy for battle. Practising deployment and understanding where units fitted into the general scheme of things whilst under no threat, was intended to reduce confusion when called upon to perform in more trying circumstances. It was also an opportunity to sort out the relative strengths, experience and readiness of each of his twenty regiments of Foot. To attempt such an analysis is difficult and fraught with hindsight generalisations but what is known is that:

4 regiments had seen action and done well at Edgehill.
1 regiment had not been at Edgehill but had been at Reading.
6 regiments had been raised later but had been at Reading.
3 were untried London and Kent units but had some experience.
5 regiments were untried militia.
1 militia regiment had been in Kent but seen little action.

The Foot Regiments under Essex for the Relief of Gloucester

Colonel Henry Barclay's Regiment
Colonel Sir William Brooke's Regiment
Colonel Sir Henry Bulstrode's Regiment
Colonel Sir William Constable's Regiment
Lord General Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex's Regiment
Colonel James Holborne's Regiment
Colonel John Holmstead's Regiment
Colonel George Langham's Regiment
Sergeant-Major General Randall Mainwaring's Regiment
Colonel Francis Martin's Regiment
Colonel John, Lord Robartes' Regiment
Sergeant-Major General Philip Skippon's Regiment
Colonel Sir William Springate's Regiment
Colonel Francis Thompson's Regiment
Colonel Thomas Tyrell's Regiment
The Red Regiment, London Trained Bands
The Blue Regiment, London Trained Bands
The Red Regiment, City of London Auxiliaries
The Blue Regiment, City of London Auxiliaries
The Orange Regiment, City of London Auxiliaries

23 At the start of the campaign Essex gathered together eight of his most senior and trusted officers to act as his Council of War. This was most likely increased to thirteen when the army finally joined together. Naturally Essex called the meetings and his secretary Baldwyn kept minutes. Luke is believed to have acted as a quasi Chief of Staff, with John Pym's son Charles as an ex-officio liaison officer.

Their combined strength was around 10,500 and all but Essex's, Skippon's and two of the London Trained Bands units had less than 500 men.

Using his experience as a staff officer on the continent Essex arrayed them in the Dutch manner into five brigades, or battalia. These he placed under his most senior and most experienced officers, although it must be remembered that at this early stage in the war very few of them had seen a lot of action.

The Officers commanding Essex's Foot

Lieutenant General Philip Skippon: a friend from the wars in the Palatinate who had commanded the Trained Bands at Turnham Green. Skippon was a devout, forceful and resourceful man with such a prestigious experience pedigree that he also had overall command of the infantry.

Colonel James Holborne: a Scots professional who had also served on the Continent.

Sergeant Major General Randall Mainwaring: no battlefield experience but had been a strict enforcer whilst putting down the Kent uprising.

Colonel John, Lord Robartes: no foreign military experience but had been at Edgehill.

Colonel Henry Barclay: a Scots professional who had also served on the Continent.

Essex's regiments and troops of Horse were even more of a mixed bag. Some were veterans of Powick and Edgehill where they had varied fortunes, some had fought well and escaped relatively unscathed, some had fought and been badly cut-up whilst others had collapsed in melee and others had run to a man. Several regiments were unknown to Essex but he was grateful for their numbers. There were fifteen regiments of Horse, some with companies of dragoons.

The Horse Regiments under Essex for the Relief of Gloucester

Lieutenant General Sir William Balfour's Regiment
Colonel Hans Behre's Regiment
Colonel John Dalbier's Regiment
The Lord General, Earl of Essex's Regiment
The Lord General, Earl of Essex's Lifeguard
Colonel Bazil Fielding, Earl of Denbigh's Regiment
Colonel Arthur Goodwin's Regiment
Colonel Lord Grey of Groby's Regiment
Colonel Edmund Harvey's Regiment
Scout Master General Sir Samuel Luke's Regiment
Colonel John Meldrum's Regiment
Colonel John Middleton's Regiment
Colonel Richard Norton's Regiment
Commissary General Sir James Ramsey's Regiment
Colonel James Sheffield's Regiment

Again strengths varied and some were considerably under strength; Essex's Lifeguard was little more than a large troop.

Essex had no obvious choice for overall command of the cavalry. All those who could have taken on such a role were unavailable. William Russell, Earl of Bedford who had been Lieutenant General of Horse at Edgehill had defected. The Commissary General, another veteran of Edgehill, Sir James Ramsey, was not totally trusted either for his ability or his loyalty. Of the other leading cavalrymen, John Hamden was dead and Arthur Goodwin who had proved an effective commander, had died during the typhus epidemic, whilst Sir William Balfour, who had been Bedford's second in command at Edgehill, was ill and had gone abroad for his health. So Essex put his trust in his friend Sir Philip Stapleton who had proved himself alongside Hampden and had commanded Essex's own Regiment of Horse. He had fought well at both Edgehill and Chalgrove and although a young man and not very politically astute, he had become one of Essex's senior advisors.

The various regiments of Horse were not so much brigaded together as divided between two wings.

The Officers commanding Essex's Horse

Lieutenant General Sir Philip Stapleton: a friend of Essex's but considered rash in some circumstances and somewhat old-fashioned in his ideas of how Horse should be handled.

Commissary General Sir James Ramsey: a Scots professional whose command at Edgehill had dissolved in the face of Rupert's charge.

They were assisted by Hans Behr, a German, and John Middleton, a Scot, both veterans of the wars on the continent. There was another commander worthy of note in this hastily collected amalgam of officers and men, Captain Carlo Fantom. He was a Croat and unashamedly only interested in money and women. He was also a self-confessed 'hard man' who spread a story that as a boy he had eaten certain herbs in the forest of the Balkans which made him invulnerable to sword cuts and impervious to musket and pistol balls![24]

The artillery plus its ammunition and impedimenta, was something of a sponge where money was concerned, and was under the control of another of Essex's friends and close advisors, Sir John Merrick, who was both an experienced and capable officer and a good administrator. The original General of Artillery, John Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, had died and the man who commanded it at Edghill, a Monsieur du Bois, had proved somewhat inept.[25] Although not burdened with the need to transport much in the way of provisions or hordes of camp followers, Merrick's train consisted of some 50 artillery pieces, somewhere around 300 to 350 barrels of powder and about 150 wagons and carriages pulled by some 750+ horses. With no central governing body, being essentially civilian in nature and with rampant private enterprise, seventeenth century artillery is a complicated subject with classifications and descriptions varying from authority to authority. Those assigned to Essex's expedition were a mixed bag of ordnance of various calibres and weights with guns ranging from culverins to falcons,

24 After an adventurous career during which he switched loyalties, Fantom was accused of war crimes by both sides and seemingly escaped execution by firing squad but was eventually hanged for rape by his new royalist employers.

25 Du Bois can appear as de Boyes.

even perhaps robinets. Below is an attempt to show comparative statistics of various artillery pieces.

Table 6.1: Seventeenth Century Artillery

Name	Bore Inches	Shot Wt. lbs.	Charge Pounds*	Pt.Blnk Yards	Utmost Yards	Weight Pounds	Horses Needed	Men Needed**
Demi-cannon	6	27	18	340	1,700	4,000	16/20	48
Culverin	5	15	12	400	2,500	3,400	10/12	40
Demi-Culverin	4½	11¾	9	380	1,800	3,000	7/8	36
Saker	3¾	5½	5½	300	1,500	1,900	5/6	24
Minion	3¼	3	5	280	1,400	1,100	4	20
Falcon	2¼	2½	2½	260	1,200	750	3	16
Robinet	1½	¾	¾	150	700	300	2	8

* In lbs of Serpentine (nor corned) powder.

** Usual crew needed to work or even drag a gun forward with all its equipment.

Source: National Archives, S.P. 12/242, ff. 64 and 65; R. Ward, *Animadversions of Warre* (London, 1639); W. Eldred, *The Gunners' Glasse* (London, 1646); A.R. Hall, *Ballistics of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1952).

Suggested Estimation of Merrick's guns

5 culverins (perhaps including even 2 demi-cannon)
3 demi-culverins
10 sakers
30 minions, falcons and robinets

As mentioned previously, many of the heavier pieces were destined to swell the numbers of guns being employed for the defence of Gloucester, but all would have useful if the army was to fight a field battle either on its way to the relief or afterwards as it made its way back to London.

On 1 September, with approximately a total of 15,000 men, the army moved from the area around Bicester to that around Banbury with Essex's headquarters being established at Aynho. Banbury Castle was now a royalist garrison but no attempt to take the place was made as Essex maintained his primary objective of getting to Gloucester as soon as possible. The various brigades were again dispersed so as to make living off the land easier and to disguise their numbers; the intention was to convince royalist intelligence that the countryside was alive with an unending torrent of parliamentarian soldiers. Wilmot, who had been quartered in Bletchingdon, did his best to harass them and there were skirmishes between scouts and patrols wherever they went, but in accordance with his orders he did little more, apart from try and make a stand at a crossing place of the River Cherwell, where although he outnumbered the regiments sent against him, he was driven off.

On 2 September, once across the Cherwell, Essex called in his dispersed columns to form one long body which must have been over five miles long as it snaked its way down the road and across the countryside either side of it. Marching in one body seriously impeded their ability to forage but it was safer as they were moving into the Cotswold Hills where the royalist cavalry would have a pronounced advantage and they could be attacked by a rapidly

assembled combined force from both Oxford and Gloucester. There was another problem in that although now marching together, various elements or components of the column marched at different speeds so it gradually broke apart. Gaps began opening between portions of the army despite the best efforts of Merrick to keep his vehicles moving and Luke to surround the entire army with a protective screen. Luke, as Scoutmaster General, also kept up a screen of patrols trying to keep an eye on Wilmot's men who, even with the terrain now being in their favour, still did not mount a serious attack. But even Luke was not able to give much warning about a cavalry sortie out of Banbury which had to be driven off by the rearguard which included Essex's own regiment of Horse. Several alarms were also raised which gave some regiments a disturbed night. Luke may be forgiven for missing the approach of some of these sporadic attacks because his attention, like that of his commander, was fixed upon their goal and he was immersed in probing the besieging army and finding out where they were quartered, which units were where and trying to discover their state of readiness.

On Sunday 3 September Essex had the whole army attend drumhead services before pressing on to Chipping Norton. There was another skirmish in the evening which was driven off this time by Ramsey. Although royalist numbers in these brief engagements are not known it would appear that Essex ordered his standard defensive measure of sending two cavalry regiments to see them off.

The weather turned cold. Despite the popular image of the Cotswolds as warm sandstone villages amid a verdant, rural idyll, its open hills can be bitterly cold and often shrouded in damp, low cloud when biting winds do not disperse it. Due to this downturn in the weather the already disjointed army eschewed camping in the fields and sought shelter in the villages between Chipping Norton and Oddington, near Stow-on-the-Wold, thus making them even more spread out.

There was however a much greater threat than the cold. The royalist cavalry were gathering and Wilmot's reports had caused Prince Rupert to leave the siege lines at Gloucester, and now brought him to the Cotswolds intent upon taking control and inflicting a defeat of some kind on Essex so as to cause him to abandon the attempted relief. Rupert brought around 3,000 Horse with him and, resting in and around Northleach, he sent messages to Wilmot to rendezvous with him as soon as possible. They met that evening at Fifield, and with Wilmot's 2,000, they mustered some 5,000 of the famous Oxford Horse; the veterans of Edgehill. Wilmot relayed a more accurate picture of Essex's position and size of his army, but also gave reports of the cavalry actions in which he had been engaged, coupled with the story that this time Essex's Horse did not appear to be as brittle in morale or as ineptly controlled as they were wont to be. They were now a creditable fighting force. Rupert did not know what to expect, but knew that if Essex could not exert complete control to keep his army tightly together the royalists had a good chance of a telling victory, especially if they could attack a somewhat isolated part of it over open countryside. He ordered an advance to Bourton-on-the-Water.

From information from Wilmot's scouts, Rupert had selected their target – the untried London Militia who had ventured too far forward and away from the main body in their search for shelter and supplies. The London regiments had the vanguard on 3 September and left Chipping Norton, marching westwards towards Stow-on-the-Wold. Their march was free of the train and consequently moved fairly quickly, bringing them to a cluster of villages about two miles to the north of Stow, some distance from the rest of the army. Although accounts of Rupert's attack are detailed the intended camping area of the London Brigade is not given but is believed they were to cross the River Evenlode and bed down around Oddington west of the river. However, as the Blue Regiment arrived it occupied the houses and outbuildings, it became apparent that one small village could not accommodate the whole brigade. News travelled back down the column and units left the road and fanned out investing other villages to the north and south including Adelstrop and Daylesford to the east of the river. This obliged the Red Regiment as the last unit in the column, firstly to cross the river and then continue through Oddington to Upper Oddington, about half a mile further west. Even then not all of them could squeeze into the farm buildings and many spent a cold night under the hedges.[26] More importantly the inexperienced militia officers had bivouacked on both sides of the Evenlode thus spreading out the already isolated brigade and putting an obstacle in the way of their rallying together. It was a catastrophe waiting to happen and the royalist Horse duly obliged.

Shortly after breakfasting Foster tells us that a rider on a horse which had been shot in the neck gave the alarm that the royalists were upon them.[27] Details of the events are available in other works, but in summary, their fast-thinking commanding officer, William Tucker immediately sent people to rouse the rest of the brigade and to inform Essex of their plight. He then ordered the seven companies of the Red Regiment to draw up in the open on an east-running spur of Oddington Hill and prepare to make a stand lining a stout hedgerow. Rupert however did not attack, his decision being understandable in the light of the agreement taken by the king and his Council at Oxford not to engage in a pitched battle although there may also have been another influencing factor. Harvey caused a demi-culverin to be deployed and it sent balls among the royalists. The affair went through several phases but came to an end when more parliamentarian regiments arrived. Essex called up more artillery and had them open up. No cavalry formation willingly stands under artillery fire losing men and horses and unable to reply. Rupert withdrew his entire force a short distance back towards Stow. Essex countered this retirement by bringing up two heavier guns with a greater range and recommenced firing on them and causing them to retire again permitting the parliamentarians to resume their march.

Rupert's force reformed on the slopes to the east of Stow, causing Essex to halt and order his guns to deploy and fire. Rupert had no other option but to give up and retire yet again. The army then passed through Stow and marched on. Foster records 'they all fled, and we pursued them and followed

26 Foster, op.cit.
27 *Ibid.*

them three miles', but there they discovered Rupert once more deployed on a hillside with a small stream on the low ground in front of them. [28] He appears to have had some dragoons with him which were deployed dismounted in front of his position. Essex once more repeated his previous aggressive course of action, using 200 commanded muskets, 40 dragoons, two small guns and two regiments of cavalry. They all got over the stream and deployed, with the two guns opening fire. However, they were not powerful enough and desultory shooting between the two forces continued until the remainder of the parliamentarian army came up. Essex called up the London brigade who formed in line of battalions some 6 deep and 800 wide, nearly 5,000 in total. It must have been an impressive sight especially as other units could be seen deploying in support. They crossed the stream and as they advanced up the slope Rupert is reputed to have said that he thought all the roundheads in England were there. He once again had no other option than to retire, in fact to call off the whole business of trying to delay Essex. Some sporadic skirmishing between cavalry screens continued the fight until nightfall and Essex ordered a halt to the advance and to encamp for the night of 4 September around the village of Naunton.

They had covered thirteen miles from Chipping Norton and were almost across the open Cotswolds. Moreover, the original part of the army had, in the main, recovered its morale. Significant elements in this were: their regimental numbers had been returned to somewhere near their pre-typhus strengths; the army had been reinforced by the London Brigade; they had received new issues of clothes; they had been paid; they had achieved a good rate of march; and their Horse had been able to screen them effectively and ward off Wilmot's attacks. Now, causing Rupert and his experienced Oxford Horse to fall back several times and finally leave the field, must have been very heartening to both Essex and his men. However, Rupert had not only seen the size of that army but also learnt it was capable of responding competently under Essex's adroit command.

However, all was far from comfortable for the men. Although they continued to march, they were desperately short of food and very tired; a situation that had gone on for about six days. Foster complains that he and his fellows did not even have bread and water. The shortage of fresh drinking water was so severe that Foster reported that men would often 'run half a mile or a mile … [to] where they heard water was.'[29] Added to which, most witnesses complained of the cold that night, especially those who had no houses or outbuildings to occupy and made do with sleeping in the fields, huddled around fires. For late summer the weather was very unkind. Despite an uncomfortable night they resumed their march; this time instead of having the vanguard the London Brigade brought up the rear. As they marched west towards Cheltenham there was little sign of Rupert, for which Essex was thankful as he had to concentrate upon selecting the most appropriate way down the Cotswold escarpment into the Severn Valley. He could have chosen to go southwest via Andoversford or west and down Prestbury Hill. Wary of getting caught as his army negotiated the steep

28 *Ibid.*
29 *Ibid.*

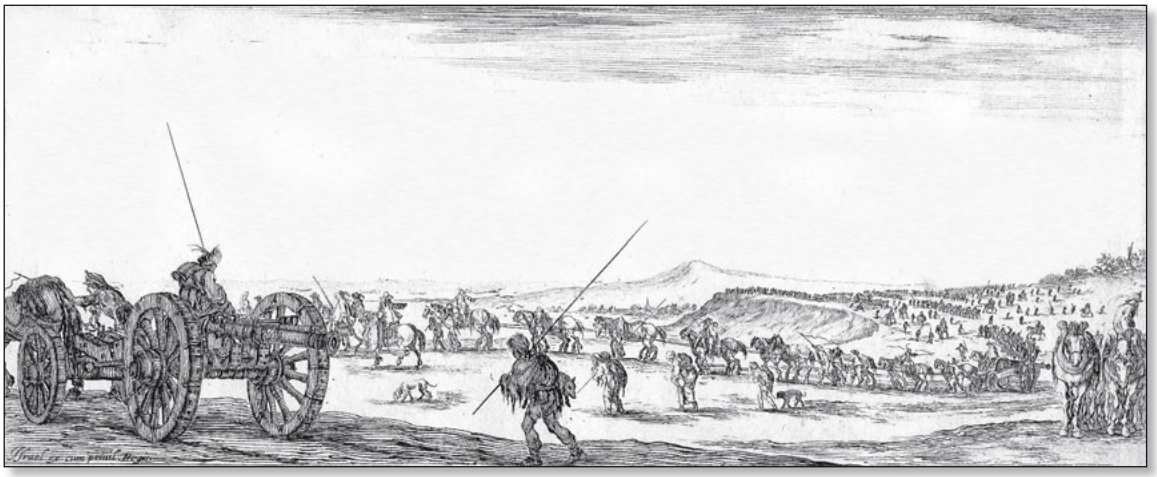
slopes and still worrying about the open nature of the countryside, Essex elected to take the shortest way to the protection of the Severn Valley villages, enclosures, coppices and generally more inhibited terrain. Fortunately Essex went for Prestbury. Rupert was at Andoversford!

Prestbury is a large village northeast of Cheltenham and there Essex had four big guns fired to let Massey, the inhabitants of Gloucester and the royalists know they were there and even drew up in battle formation on a hillside so any interested enemy could see them. It is interesting to speculate as to why this demonstration occurred so far from Gloucester. Obviously Essex was reminding his men of their battle formation and positions but it was possibly to serve another purpose. A portion of the king's army was across the Severn, but during the siege the major area of operation was in the vicinity of Gloucester's East Gate, consequently Essex was announcing that his position was on the flank of this part of the besieging force. To face Essex meant the king had to gather the whole royal army together from its attempted circumvallation of the city. To have done so would have been quite a task but it was possible. Essex must have known that for the king to fight him, it meant turning his back on Gloucester and thus become vulnerable to a sortie attacking his rear. Perhaps Essex was hoping that as the royalists could not both maintain the siege and defeat the relieving force, they would abandon their siege.

Unbeknown to Essex the king and Lord General Patrick Ruthven, Earl of Forth, had already ordered the evacuation of the lines. To have been caught in their trenches, sandwiched between Essex and Massey would have been a disastrous tactical mistake so, ordering Rupert to cover their withdrawal and saying that they were going to fight Essex before his army reached the hedges of the Severn Valley, they marched away on 5 September. They were too late; Essex reached Prestbury the same day.

However, not only did Rupert manage to cover the quitting of the lines but he also put a force across Essex's route at the foot of Prestbury Hill. They were dealt with in the same manner as before. A single demi-culverin put a shot into the nearest body of Rupert's men and they withdrew. It would seem the four signal guns also directed their shot at the rest of the royalist blocking force and it too wheeled about and went off.

With Essex again leading from the front, the forlorn hope of the parliamentarian army descended Prestbury hill in the late summer twilight but the weather turned nasty once more with high winds, driving rain and biting cold. As the storm broke so did the columns as the exhausted and nearly starving men slithered down the hillside making for the shelter of the village and the hope of a dry, warm night with food and drink. Essex twisted his leg on the descent and had to be helped to his billet. Once Prestbury was full they began to spill out into the other villages and hamlets nearby. Harvey was with a party of officers who rode ahead of the men to secure better lodgings, but they had been beaten to it by two troops of Horse who mistook them for enemy. The error was soon realised but not before they had pistolled them, mortally wounding Cornet Flesher. The officers duly crammed into the already crowded quarters whilst the army, relieved that they were now in the hedged and relatively safe protection of the Severn



An Army on the March, engraving by S. Della-Bella. (Turton Collection)

Valley, settled down to a well-deserved rest, but it was still an awful night of privation. Many of the local inhabitants had prudently hidden what food they had from royalist foraging parties and were not prepared to reveal it to the newcomers.

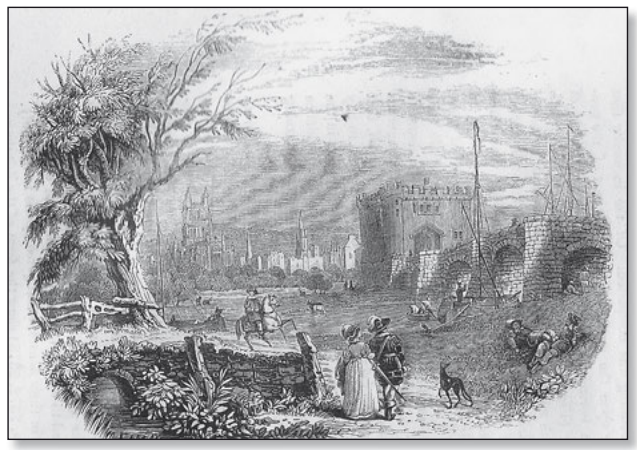
Unfortunately not all the soldiers had buildings to sleep in. The London Brigade once again missed out due to being ordered to remain on the hilltop to protect the baggage wagons for which it was deemed too dangerous to descend in such a storm. Some wagons were blown over on their sides and others had slid in the mud and wrecked. Foster called it 'a most terrible tempestuous night wind and rain as ever men lay out in'.[30] Up on the exposed hilltop they had neither hedges nor trees to give them respite from the gales and downpours, and many were so on edge that one man was shot by a sentry who mistook him for the enemy.

In Gloucester Massey had not heard Essex's guns but, having witnessed the royalists withdrawing from their lines, the night of 5 September was given over to celebrations. The siege was over and the city was relieved. Amid the prayers of thanksgiving for their deliverance, the garrison also issued forth and occupied the trenches, stealing anything of use left behind and setting fire to the props in the royalist-dug mines and dismantling their gun batteries. They thought the relief column must be near and sent scouts to look for it, but they did not attempt to attack the rear of the retreating royal army lest it occasioned them to turn about.

On 6 September, the king ordered an assembly of his entire army on top of the Cotswold Escarpment on Birdlip Hill, about six miles southeast of Gloucester. Meanwhile Essex got his remaining regiments and baggage off Prestbury Hill, then nursing his injured leg, he personally led a probe towards Cheltenham. In his absence the royalist cavalry made several raids, beating up quarters and putting the army on alarm. The two largest regiments of the London Brigade, vowing to take no more adverse conditions took independent action and marched away to the west to Norton, north of Gloucester on the Tewkesbury road where they installed themselves

30 *Ibid.*

receiving what Foster called 'reasonable accommodation and refreshment'.[31] The rest of the army also dispersed among the villages, some moving closer to Gloucester others remaining in Prestbury. The cause of this dispersal was the news from Gloucester that in the face of the relief force coming so close the royalists had lifted their siege. However, although overjoyed that they had been relieved and looking forward to receiving the triumphant army, after such a protracted siege the citizens of Gloucester did not have the wherewithal to feed it.



View of Gloucester, from an old engraving. (Turton Collection)

Essex's army, being so spread out again invited the attentions of royalist cavalry raids. Dalbier's Regiment was attacked on 6 September, and on 7 September it was the turn of Behre's and Goodwin's who had been quartering in Winchcombe. They were driven out of the village by the Queen's Regiment who captured Major Boza's cornet. Wilmot was making a nuisance of himself just as he had in the early part of the campaign; however his motives were more than the simple beating up of quarters. He was beginning to systematically acquire territory between Gloucester and Oxford in preparation for preventing Essex's return to London.

Edward Massey, a contemporary engraving. (Turton Collection)

Meanwhile over 6 and 7 September in the city itself, a two day market was held in an attempt to bring in provisions to feed Essex's men. It was successful, with the country people bringing in so much food that the royalist citizens marvelled at the amount of provisions appearing from areas they thought they had entirely stripped. Conversely Rupert reported that he was having extreme difficulty in finding supplies for his own men, let alone those of the king and the other generals, even royalist garrisons and estates pleaded that they did not have anything to give him. Parliamentarian patrols took no such refusals from royalist supporters and their farms, manors and great houses were thoroughly searched, and anything valuable including caches of crops from the summer's harvests, were quickly appropriated. Gloucester's store of grain had been run down during the siege but now it was replenished as Essex's men started to gather provisions for the army's return journey.

The arrival of Merrick with the baggage train meant Massey's ammunition could be replenished and 40 barrels of powder were duly given to his quartermasters along with the amounts of musket shot and match that had been brought from London. Cannon balls would not have been in short supply. Harvey noted that he was told that some 300-400 balls from heavy guns alone had been shot into the city and these were gathered up, along with those of lighter calibres, and put into the city arsenal. Essex also handed over some of his heavy guns, including at least three of the culverins. It appears he decided not to give them all to Massey as they had proved so useful on

31 *Ibid.*

the march to Gloucester in persuading Rupert not to seriously oppose him. He wisely thought they just might have to do the same job during his return march.

Eventually, after rest and recuperation in the villages around the city, on 8 September Essex and his men marched in to a feted triumph, and the good citizens of Gloucester were able to inscribe on their South Gate the immortal words, "A City assaulted by Man, but saved by God!" They also incised the plea "Ever remember the Vth Sept.1643." – a pledge honoured as a public local holiday until recently. The army paraded through the streets amid cheering crowds and was given two nights to enjoy the freedom of alehouses without paying for a drink. This was just as well because Essex had again run out of money and pay was not forthcoming, yet this was perhaps understandable given his distance from London and the amount of enemy territory between the Treasury and his army.

Essex's relief of the Siege of Gloucester was a major achievement. His army had marched in appalling weather from London to the Severn and caused the king's forces to withdraw before them. The gratitude of the citizens, their celebrations, food, drink and free quarter went someway to reward them for all their efforts but discontent was beginning to murmur in the background despite the triumph. The men wanted to go home.

Everyone knew Essex had to march out. Royalist broadsheets were already saying that the king intended to bottle them up in the city and starve them and the rebellious citizens to death. They could not remain in Gloucester because although food might have been adequate in the short term, if the army stayed longer starvation would become a very real prospect for both civilians and soldiers. The king was under no illusion that Essex would break out with the intention of making for London. Charles and his advisors also realised that if they could destroy Parliament's major field army in open battle, the war could be brought to speedy and dramatic end. They also knew that, as they had done at Edgehill in October 1642, they only had to place themselves between Essex and London, severing his lines of communication and cutting off his line of retreat, that Essex would have to fight, and, if badly mauled, the remnants of his force would fall prey to the troops in Oxford and its ring of garrisons.

7

The First Newbury Campaign, Autumn 1643

In Gloucester the pressure on Essex to return to London had been growing, not least from his own men especially the Londoners who thought their job done and their spell in the field army at an end. Although morale was better than it had been and they had not lost many men since leaving London, Essex had to select a route home which gave his army the best chance of getting back intact. Again he was faced with the problems of the open countryside of the Cotswolds and the garrisons of Oxford with its satellite fortified places; in addition the royal army was now unfettered from its need to maintain a siege so it could move and strike wherever it wanted. Essex however had a plan: they would not retrace the steps of their advance and they would move faster. Their march to Gloucester had been slowed down by their fully laden supply wagons and heavy guns. Having handed over the provisioning stores, ammunition and some of the guns, his train was not so cumbersome. He retained some twenty guns to support the army – a few heavies and mediums but the rest were light. Sources regarding the number of each type on this return leg are elusive but an approximate split of six and fourteen seems appropriate.[1] By leaving the heavier guns behind and reducing the weight and number of wagons in his train as well as redistributing the draught horses and harnessing more beasts to each vehicle, Essex ensured that his army could both march at a faster speed and utilise poorer roads, even resorting to going cross country if the situation called for it.

Strategically the royalists had the upper hand, being able to intercept Essex's return where they wished. The king and his advisors knew that Essex and his army had to get back to London and that they had sufficient men to meet him in a pitched battle. Both sides had rough parity in artillery but Essex had about 10,000 Foot to the king's 9,000 whilst his 4,000 Horse was outnumbered by the royalist's 6,000. However, with no pay forthcoming and provisions adequate but not abundant, despite their recent success, Essex's

1 He had enough fairly large pieces to create a battery on Round Hill in the forthcoming first battle of Newbury, whilst the majority of his artillery was spread out along his battle line.

army's morale was beginning to waver especially when news arrived of the fall of Exeter to Prince Maurice.

Essex had two choices of route for the return march. The first was to go north to Tewkesbury and then march in the protective lee of the two parliamentarian garrisons of Warwick and Coventry in the midlands. This would keep him in the Severn Valley and its more friendly terrain, as well as enable him to gather food and take his army though the known country of the Edgehill Campaign. Once at Tewkesbury he could switch river valleys and follow the similar terrain of the River Avon through Pershore, Evesham and Warwick. Moreover, by taking and holding the bridges as he went he could keep the river between him and the king so he might be able to avoid a battle. The second choice was to revisit a route he had contemplated for the advance. That is to march rapidly across the dangerous open Cotswolds to Cirencester and then across the similarly precarious Wiltshire Downs south of Swindon to Hungerford where he could cross its bridge over the Kennet and, keeping the river once again between him and the king, advance to Newbury along the Kennet Valley where they would recross the river and march along the Great West Road to the safety of Reading.

The choice of route seems to have been Essex's alone although his Council did meet. Day argues that Essex's responsibility for the plan perhaps owed much to his autocratic nature and the lack of experienced senior officers available.[2] The loss of so many at Chalgrove was beginning to tell. Whether he had his various exit-strategy options prepared before he left Uxbridge is debateable as so much depended upon what the king or Rupert did with the royal army. His cavalry patrols and spy reports kept him as well briefed as they could until he finally reached his decision. He decided to combine the two routes.

Essex was no fool when deciding upon strategy and like many of his contemporary general officers he employed deception as a campaign ploy. On 10 September he marched out of Gloucester, north for Tewkesbury, where he obliged the town to feed his men whilst he sent patrols into Herefordshire to raid and gather provisions. He made this easier by throwing a bridge of boats over the River Severn making use of his own bridging train which had been towed up river from Gloucester where it had been stored since before Edgehill. This bridge and the move northward were both a way to feed his men and replenish stocks of corn, but they were also a ruse.[3] Spies on both sides were active and Essex relied upon word getting through to the royalists that he was constructing a major bridge which implied that he was going to cross into Herefordshire. By doing so he could threaten one of the king's most fruitful recruiting and supply regions, and take a more northern route home; it could even indicate that he was contemplating an assault upon Worcester. To strengthen the idea that an attempt upon Worcester was in the offing Essex had a significant force of his cavalry move to Upton-on-Severn.

The royalists, then grouped around the small Cotswold market town of Sudeley, were not completely lulled into thinking Essex was making

2 Day, J., *Gloucester & Newbury 1643* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2007), p.114.
3 Jennings, R.W., *The Cotswolds in the Civil War* (Cirencester, Corinium Museum, 1976), p.12.

for Worcester but they could not ignore it, especially as that city was a key supporter of the royal cause and an important centre of supply and monies. So the king ordered his army to Evesham and then Pershore from where they could still strike at any force attempting to threaten Worcester but could also thwart any attempt by Essex to use the Evesham and Warwick route to London. Essex's attempt to fool the king had not worked perfectly but it had drawn his army northward, which was good enough, because Parliament's general had chosen to take the southern loop around Oxford.

One of the contributing reasons for this decision may have again been food.[4] Armies tend to denude areas through which they pass of foodstuffs and firewood. They generally cut a ten mile wide swath of destruction and depravation through the countryside. As they were no longer burdening themselves with many supply wagons, Essex's men would have been even more dependent on living off the land and thus, returning via the northern loop where they had already had a pretty torrid time would have been courting severe shortages, especially in fodder for their horses. A modern reader needs to appreciate just how vital horses were to life in the seventeenth century, thus to place their care in jeopardy was unthinkable unless absolutely necessary. Luke's intelligence gatherers had also been busy probing this new route home and had reported that despite there being a royalist supply convoy for Prince Maurice's army in royalist-held Cirencester, it was not well guarded and that the town itself was well disposed toward Parliament. Beyond that, Newbury would also be welcoming, so by capturing royalist provender and having friendly townspeople to source further supplies, the need for food could be greatly alleviated before reaching the army's depot at Reading.

On 13 September Luke reported that a strong body of royalist Horse was trying to surround the parliamentarian cavalry at Upton, so orders were sent for them to withdraw. They escaped in the nick of time and fell back across the bridge of boats into Tewkesbury. Although Essex's army was safe in Tewkesbury, like Gloucester, it could not remain there long and by staying put it would hand over more of the strategic initiative to the king. Being further assured by Luke's efficient intelligence system that the royal army was concentrated in the Vale of Evesham, Essex ordered the army to march out during the night of 14 September. The fate of the bridge of boats has not been discovered but it is unlikely it would have been left to the enemy or the delighted locals. The structure was probably dismantled and what boats could escape returned downriver to Gloucester.

Essex marched south-east from Tewkesbury, leaving the king's army partially wrong-footed. According to *Mercurius Aulicus* the march was evidently undertaken at speed and in relative silence although this royalist broadsheet assigns the reasons for this to fear and a disordered run for it. The men must have been wary because the area was full of royalist patrols and one commanded by Rupert himself, successfully attacked Sir James Ramsey's Regiment as it prepared to leave its quarters at the village of Oxington. Fortunately for Essex, Rupert retired in triumph, having failed to realise he

4 Some of the corn gathered around Tewkesbury was sent to help feed Gloucester.

was witnessing a full evacuation of the parliamentarian army.[5] Meanwhile, now on full alert to further incursions, the army made a rapid march of some ten miles to Cheltenham. From there they climbed the Severn escarpment and crossed the dangerous open Cotswolds. Whether the proximity of Rupert's men or the desire to leave the rest of the king's army behind prompted him or not, rather than rest around Cheltenham, Essex decided to push on, exalting his men to a prodigious feat. Their advance guard reached Cirencester during the night of 15 September, having marched over twenty five miles in twenty four hours and the main body of the army was not far behind including their artillery train.

Horse quickly surrounded Cirencester seeking to discover its outposts and the location of its guards (yet another tribute to Luke's men) and early on the morning of 16 September Essex sent in an attack, initially led by Major Robert Hammond of Essex's own troop who took the first of the outguards. Infantry, under the command of Sir Robert Pye, then rushed the other sentry posts and after some desultory musketry, carried the town. There were few casualties on either side but Pye was wounded in the arm.[6] Essex's attack was a complete surprise and the royalist garrison was taken in its beds. Royalist intelligence relayed to the officer in command at Cirencester believed Essex to still be in the Severn Valley and about two days away. Digby records that Essex managed the capture with great silence, secrecy and what he terms 'strange diligence'.

To briefly digress: it seems that the idea of Essex being over-cautious may have been a criticism of the Parliament pro-war and pro-Waller factions but it was certainly seized upon and repeated in numerous royalist writings, including asides such as that of Digby. It may be an exaggeration of a frame of mind brought about by the genuine care of his men's lives and an understanding of their fragility and lack of experience, but historians over the years appear to have taken this frequent repetition at face-value and fanned the idea of Essex being lacklustre and lacking aggression. This is not necessarily true because contemporary propaganda says it is. Cirencester was certainly an example of his ability to make a decisive lightning strike.

As the rest of the army entered the town of Cirencester, the full extent of their victory was realised. They had captured between 30 and 40 wagons full of foodstuffs plus other provisions stacked in a schoolhouse, as well as some two hundred prisoners from two regiments of Horse who supposedly had been destined to fight in Kent. They paraded their captured cornets as trophies of war, but more importantly by capturing their horses it meant replacements could now be found for those whose mounts had broken down or were showing signs of exhaustion; and the captured draught horses too were invaluable additions to Essex's force. He permitted his men to remain in Cirencester for the rest of the day and night and spent most of 16 September

5 Historians have frequently to judge which sources to believe. Byron states that Rupert ignored his reports informing him that Essex was on the move whilst Rupert's Diary claims he knew of the evacuation and informed the king, and that it was Charles and his advisors, including Digby who ignored the vital intelligence.

6 One source ascribes the leadership of the action to a Colonel Alexander Brackley (possibly Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Bayley) who might have taken over when Pye was wounded.

giving them time to eat, drink and sleep. Then, taking stock of what they had acquired, putting it to use and roping the prisoners together in pairs, they marched. A royalist raiding party entered the town shortly afterwards but could do nothing to recapture their lost stores and regiments, so promptly left, taking with them a few prisoners, captured because they were too drunk to march out with their comrades.

During the afternoon of 16 September Essex covered another six miles to Cricklade where they used its bridge across the Thames.[7] En route in the village of Latton, the London Brigade discovered that their arrival caused ten cartloads of sick and wounded royalists, presumably recuperating from the Siege of Gloucester, to suddenly recover from their ills to take to their heels, leaving their beds, billets and provisions to many of the lucky Londoners. Fosters recalls ' … when they heard we were marching to this place, they found their legges and ran away'.[8]

The king's army was slow to realise that Essex had got away and Essex had managed his march in such a successful manner that it was several days before the royalists discovered he had gone and just where he was. As the parliamentarians entered Cricklade the royalists realised that their prey had eluded them and then began the chase.

Essex's army covered only five miles the next day and moved slowly being encumbered with prisoners, the captured wagons and several herds of sheep and cattle which, presumably had been taken by the king's men which they did not appear to be over-anxious to return to their owners. They all reached Swindon on Sunday 17 September in the rain where they rested once more and indeed had a sermon preached, before spreading out among the smaller villages for the night. Essex and his staff as well as The Red Regiment, quartered at Chiseldon, but whereas the officers stayed in comfort in the grand Burderop House where once Elizabeth I had sojourned, the Londoners bivouacked in the fields and had a thoroughly miserable time of it.[9] Foster called Chiseldon 'a poor village … where we could get no accommodation either for meat or drink, but what we brought with us in our snapsacks; most of us quartered in the open field'.[10]

Essex was obviously taking his time and although he is often criticised for this somewhat leisurely pace after Cirencester he was marching with acquired booty and prisoners and acting on unreliable intelligence; Luke's men had finally let him down. He was told the king's army was at Stow-on-the-Wold and heading for Oxford and that even those who had raided Cirencester after he had departed were now heading north towards Sudeley. However, once they knew what was happening the king's army, despite being wrong-footed, had reacted surprisingly quickly to Essex's swift change of direction by using almost forced marches on interior lines to shorten the distance between them. Whereas Essex was marching south east the king used the more direct south route from Evesham down to Sudeley and then

7 Taking the prisoners with him meant they were not only being removed from the war effort and denying them to the inevitable pursuing force but relieving the townspeople of having to feed them.

8 Foster, op.cit.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid*

shadowed them on an approximately parallel course to Northleach. With Essex's army sleeping around Swindon, the main royalist army spent the night of 17 September around Alvescot near Burford. It was a cold and frosty night and the two main armies slept only about twenty miles apart.

Rupert's force was even closer; consisting of about 5,000 Horse, 1,000 commanded musketeers and possibly four 6pdr guns, he had begun around Broadway and moved faster than the main army. From Northleach he sent a party of about 1,000 troopers under the turncoat Colonel Urrey into Cirencester. It was this party that had re-entered the town shortly after Essex had left it. They did what they could to restore royalist control, mainly by killing several drunks and rounding up others, then left, not north to Sudeley as reported to Essex but south east to rejoin Rupert. Meanwhile Rupert had pushed on from Northleach to Fairford, and then over the Thames at Faringdon and on to Stanford-in-the-Vale where they rested for the night, some five miles nearer to Essex than the king.

Unbeknown to Essex both sides were in a race for Newbury and the Great West Road to London, and although the king's forces were moving as fast as possible it looked as if Essex, even though oblivious to the proximity of the danger, was going to win; he had about thirty miles to cover whilst the king had nearer forty. Ostensibly Essex had a choice of routes to Newbury but all three involved having to cross the North Wiltshire Downs. One route lay marginally southwest between Liddington and Barbury Castles to Marlborough and then east to Hungerford and Newbury. Another was directly to Newbury taking the old Roman road of Ermin Street through Wanborough, going east of Liddington then through Baydon and Stockcross into Newbury, whilst a third lay between the two and was to take a track up the west side of Liddington Hill and then pass through Snap to Albourne and Chilton Foliat to Hungerford. He chose this third route, possibly because Hungerford had a bridge over the Kennet and a main road to Newbury via Kintbury. It also meant he would then have the river between him and the royalists. This route would also avoid any enemy who might be in Marlborough.

The royalist route to Newbury lay via Wantage so in order to slow Essex's progress Rupert decided to harass him. He ordered Urrey, recently returned from Cirencester, to cut across country to intercept the parliamentarians between Chiseldon and Aldbourne, hopefully on open rolling downland and probably the last place where the royalist cavalry would have the advantage before Essex's army reached the Kennet Valley. Rupert appears to have taken the initiative away from the king and relegated his lord general, Forth, to a subordinate role.

Rupert's supplanting of the royalist Lord General Lindsey at Edgehill caused chaos, but this time his seizing of the initiative ensured that Urrey, with about 1,000 Horse, surprised the parliamentarian column on 18 September. Essex's men were moving across Aldbourne Chase in a long winding column with Stapleton leading with a good part of the Horse, followed by the Foot, another block of Horse and then the artillery followed by the train, whilst Middleton had command of about 1,000 men from several regiments of Horse forming a rearguard. They were apparently caught as they marched

Aldbourne Chase, 1972 re-enactment on the battlefield. (Photo by Steve Brain)

along the floor of the Snap Valley because, not expecting to see the enemy, they had few scouts out, and so the army was strung out on the march in what Foster describes as 'a deep valley' when the royalists made themselves visible.[11] Moreover Middleton's rearguard was somewhat far in the rear, perhaps up to a couple of miles away, supposedly escorting some of the baggage as well as covering the rear of the army.

Rupert's men were first spotted as they rode through Aldbourne Warren, high above the marching column on a ridge of land running from Upper Upham towards Aldbourne, and again Foster helps set the scene, 'the enemy upon the hills on our left flank';[12] There were between 3,000 and 5,000 royalist cavalry about to charge down the steep slopes onto the hapless infantry. Rupert's Horse appeared over a crest by the modern-day Upham Farm, having travelled down what is today the B4192.

Again accounts of what happened at Aldbourne Chase are readily available elsewhere but to summarise, Rupert's men surprised and caught Essex who was hard put to organise a defence. Urrey successfully attacked Middleton and Rupert attacked the flank of the main force. Whether Essex ordered it or it was upon the initiative of his colonels and brigade officers, the parliamentarian army was obliged to form an impromptu defensive line in the valley bottom. A desperate running battle gradually dragged in more and more units. During the fight Essex apparently achieved two things: one was to draw his rearmost regiments up the southwest slopes of the valley so as to gain a terrain advantage; and the other was to close up the rest of his column and get it off the open downs, into the lanes and among the enclosures around Aldbourne. Moreover he ordered several pieces of artillery up those slopes so as to play upon the royalists as they stood on the opposite hillside. Whether through fear of these guns or realising that he did not have a sufficiently large force, or indeed the necessary combined arms for a general engagement, Rupert hesitated and the result was a succession of piecemeal actions, all

11 *Ibid.*
12 *Ibid.*

bloody and hard fought but none constituted an all-out decisive engagement and all of which petered out when Stapleton's advance force was recalled and joined in. Essex managed to salvage the day but they had been surprised strung out in the valley without the protection of hedges and ditches and with much of the Horse too far advanced to help them. Essex's Foot could have easily fallen prey to a determined cavalry attack.[13] In his defence Rupert argued in his Diary that much to his annoyance, he was advised by several of his senior officers not to attack.[14]

At Aldbourne Essex ordered the army to proceed south to Hungerford. This six mile march was completed that night and carried out in the dark and in pouring rain. Progress was slow due to the conditions and the replacement rearguard now consisting of Stapleton's brigade and the London brigade halted about a mile short of Hungerford and billeted in Chilton Foliat. The main force reached Hungerford in the early hours of the morning and there was a brief skirmish between them and a small royalist force holding the town bridge. It resulted in the death of one royal soldier and the capture of some 25, but most moved off, leaving the parliamentarians to use the bridge to cross the Kennet where they occupied the town and took time to restore order to their shaken army and tend to their casualties. Although a somewhat remarkable post-action march in dreadful conditions, Essex had to abandon seventeen wagons and several hundred sheep and cattle. His earlier concern with feeding his army was subsumed by his desire not to have it destroyed or wasted in another surprise encounter.

The results of Aldbourne Chase have been strangely played down in accounts of the First Battle of Newbury, and despite it being a battle in its own right it has been relegated to a minor skirmish by many historians. It had the crucial effect of delaying the parliamentarian march, just as the royalists needed. Essex's performance at Aldbourne appears to have been somewhat of a mixture of a disaster in scouting and skilful reaction to a dire situation. Regrettably there are no records of what Essex actually did that day but his army behaved well despite the chaos and confusion, and then executed a night march to Hungerford. However, the result of the folly in believing intelligence that placed the royalists at such a distance that they could not contact him, Essex neglected the primary law of any army on the march and failed to send out scouts to his flanks and rear. For this he is culpable, and the losses he incurred in both manpower and abandoned stores were his fault[15]

Although Essex's army had got away from Rupert it had been delayed by about half a day and the race to Newbury was still a vital element in the campaign. Newbury is about ten miles from Hungerford and Essex permitted the army some sleep before being required to march again. They

13 Although some of the Horse was away in the rear with Middleton and most of it was at the head of the column with Stapleton, again some distance away, there was also some Horse in the centre as Byron, says Rupert, missed an opportunity to take it in the flank.

14 After the battle, Rupert's men revisiting the field collected two abandoned wagons which had overturned but were found to be still full of stores, ammunition and food. Details are not corroborated but these may have been two wagons initially captured by Urrey early in the fray.

15 Estimates of losses vary. The nearest approximation is about 80-100 per side killed and a similar number wounded.

appear to have left fairly early in the day but Essex, for some reason, seems to have believed the royalist threat had been negated. Perhaps it was because of poor intelligence, or because he now had the Kennet between him and them, or perhaps he wished to keep his whole army together so he could brush aside any opposition sent against him, but he appears to have been somewhat overconfident. He neglected to leave orders for the destruction of Hungerford Bridge once the rearguard had crossed it, which meant that Rupert could still have pursued him. He was lucky Rupert had other ideas. He also failed to send a significant force to secure the bridge at Newbury. It could be construed that he did not send troops forward because he wanted to keep his force together because there was a perceived threat of Maurice's army attacking him from the south.[16] No matter the reason, the delay was to lead to the very thing he was hoping to avoid – a major field battle with the king's army: the First Battle of Newbury.

Casting doubt upon Essex's ability as a general, Young and Holmes deride his slow march on 19 September, calling it moving at a snail's pace. This is unfair. He began his advance on Newbury soon enough, but an army takes a long time to move out of a concentrated area, moreover not all units in a large army can use the road. Roads were often reserved for the wheeled transports, so many of the Horse and Foot would have been marching across the wet marshland of the Kennet Valley. Even today with the area drained to modern agricultural standards, with a managed river plus an eighteenth century canal, it is still marshy in places, and generally wet and soft underfoot. The summer of 1643 had been rainy and September had been a wet month despite the cold, frosty nights. The rivers were high and on 19 September there was more rainfall turning the road in the valley bottom into a quagmire, bogging down men, guns and transport wagons alike. This route was safer but there were several villages, such as Kintbury, which created bottlenecks and the going was far more difficult involving lots of short, sharp gradients with streams, brooks and hedges. The argument that the king and Rupert, both with about fifteen miles between the Aldbourne area or Wantage and Newbury, were better generals because their men reached their goal ahead of Essex, who had but ten to cover, is curious. Although they had to contend with the same poor weather, Rupert's command was mostly cavalry and he was not trying to keep a whole army and its train together, whilst the king's force moved across the drier, rolling chalk downs.

Whilst the royalists were force-marching across the windswept uplands, Essex sent news ahead for the people of Newbury to prepare for the arrival of his troops. He may not have sent a large force to secure the bridge but despatched an escort with his quartermasters, whose job was to ensure the men had dry accommodation. Local legend has it that great preparations were made with thousands of welcoming meals cooked and even decorations put up in the streets despite the rain. Essex's scouts and billeting officers reached Newbury from the west late that afternoon where they were surprised by several parties of royal Horse. These were Rupert's men, who had cut across

16 False intelligence had at one stage put Maurice's army in Bath from where they could have easily marched to a rendezvous with the Rupert and the king at Newbury and between them destroyed Essex. In reality Maurice was at Totnes.

the hypotenuse of the Aldbourne-Hungerford-Newbury triangle. Pistol shots were exchanged and some fell to sword play until numbers dictated it prudent that the parliamentarians withdrew. This they did, leaving several men as prisoners and all the cooked provisions in royalist hands.

Rupert promptly responded to the situation by ordering his cavalry to push westward along the Hungerford road almost as far as Enborne, two miles west of Newbury. Before they reached the village however, they halted in a large open field where they had sufficient room to deploy ready for action. Meanwhile Rupert's Foot, a strong body of commanded musketeers under Lisle, also made it into the town and they too were sent westward. They passed through their Horse and deployed behind the hedges either side of the road to the east of Enborne and thus brought Essex's march to a standstill.

Having previously heard from his returning billeting officers that some royalists were in Newbury, and now seeing a force deployed to resist his further advance, Essex halted his army to the west of Enborne. Skippon took some muskets forward, went through the village and engaged Lisle in a brief skirmish but to no avail, so Essex had the wet and weary solders make camp for the night on Crockham Heath. Some secondary accounts and Victorian maps have them laying down in order of battle; although likely they did actually camp in their brigades ready to fight in them the next day, it is unsubstantiated and the notion of sleeping in battle array is more of a romantic Napoleonic idea. However, Essex's laying out of his camp in proximity to the enemy was more than competent. With the right wing protected by the Enborne River (often called the En Brook), the left protected by the Kennet and the baggage on the high ground east of Hamstead below Enborne Copse, they were secure; the official royalist account tells us the baggage was fenced with hedges and ditches and was inaccessible except by guarded defiles.

At nightfall Skippon was withdrawn from Enborne and given command of the north flank whilst his muskets, also partially withdrawn, remained as outguards. Essex traditionally rode through the camp to the cry of 'Hey for Old Robin!' and later spent the night in a cottage belonging to a man called Biggs in the southern sector of the field. This cottage seems rather distant from the centre of the army, but it was near where the main attack on the right was to go in the next day and was thus would have been convenient for examining the ground at close quarters.[17] Being denied Newbury, Essex had to rethink his strategy and it appears he resolved to bypass the town by hooking south of it, marching for Greenham and Aldermaston and thence to Reading. If he had to fight his way through to do so, he would.

The army slept in the open and again their commissariat seems to have broken down, the men having only what they carried in their snapsacks. However, by halting, Essex had allowed the royal infantry and artillery to catch up. By deploying to face Essex, Rupert had given him the idea that he was squaring up to the whole royal army but it was a ruse de guerre. The main body of royalists reached Newbury late that afternoon and evening, probably much to Rupert's relief as had Essex attacked he would have been obliged to

17 Whether Essex did sleep at Biggs' Cottage cannot be verified, but naturally Essex's ghost is said to haunt it, although why he should do so is a mystery.

The northern sector of the battlefield of First Newbury. (Photo by Chris Scott)

fall back just as he had done in the Cotswolds. Despite the town being openly hostile with a noted pro-Parliament community, it was made to billet many senior officers. However, the quartermasters hurried the regiments through Newbury; not only because of the anti-royalist disposition of many of the townspeople, but to put the force into a position to support Rupert if an attack came. The royalists too settled down for the night tired and wet in the open. Some camped in the enclosures west of the town but most of the royal army bivouacked on the sloping high ground southwest of Newbury, in an area either side of Wash Lane leading up to Wash Common. During the night Rupert and Lisle quit the ground near Enborne and fell back to join the king.

The king had finally achieved his strategic aim of getting across Essex's line of retreat and had a field upon which the royal army could fight the decisive tactical battle to bring about the swift termination of the war. By sheer chance it was to be to the southwest of Newbury, where there were both enclosures for the Foot and open heath for the Horse. However, it would appear that Charles was unwilling to force the issue, and although ready to fight if Essex obliged him to do so, he was not planning to force a general battle. If it came, it came; but despite advice to go onto the offensive, the king resolved to see what the morrow brought. Surprisingly Rupert's Diary indicates that he too was of the same mind, at least until the royal artillery train had arrived. This strange lack of offensive spirit was to cost the royal army dearly. As far as Essex was concerned, the tactical advantages lay with the king: the high ground to the south, the enclosures around the town, plus space to use Rupert's vaunted Horse; however, he was determined that the morrow would bring a general engagement.

Although Rupert would possibly have ridden the soon-to-be-field, Charles and his staff did not. No written or drawn battle deployment for either side has so far been discovered, and although having observed the ground, it would seem the royalists formulated no plans on how to employ it. Thinking Essex might yet again try to slip away they were not expecting to fight.[18] Conversely, Essex and his senior officers not only rode the ground but made a study of it as a potential battlefield. There are no drawings, nor personal diary, but his intention was to attack the next morning so he took stock of the ground before him.

The full description of the battle is left to more specific battle books but it is important to appreciate the lie of the land so as to understand Essex's generalship. From the heights north of the modern Enborne Road over to Red Heath and Broom Hill, there is a slope which rises from the water meadows of the River Kennett on Essex's left (north) up a series of spurs to substantial high ground on his right (south), only to drop away rather steeply down to the En Brook (or the Enbourne or even the En River according to some old maps). In plan this high ground looks rather like a giant irregular oak leaf, with Monkey Lane, an eastward road to Greenham, and hence Reading, as its stalk. Royalist Horse seem to have been on the northern portions of the 'leaf'

18 Since the losses at the taking of Bristol, the king was reluctant to instigate a set piece battle. He was not reluctant to fight but preferred to avoid it if he could.

Richard Brown, a contemporary engraving. (Turton Collection)

around Wash Common, and to have pushed westward to the vicinity of Wash Common Farm (not there in 1643), a little to the southeast of what today is known as the Round Hill. However, the majority of the open Wash Common, and the slopes opposite Boames Hill (west), seemed unoccupied. This terrain, taking in what is today the cricket field, and the high ground overlooking the Newbury by-pass would have made an ideal defensive position for the royal army but it was ignored.

Because Newbury was both easily defensible and in royalist hands, Essex abandoned his plan to use the Great West Road north of the Kennet and instead to go for another usable road south of the river which led to Reading via Greenham Common. The first part of this road was Monkey Lane which ran west to east across the northern edge of Wash Common.

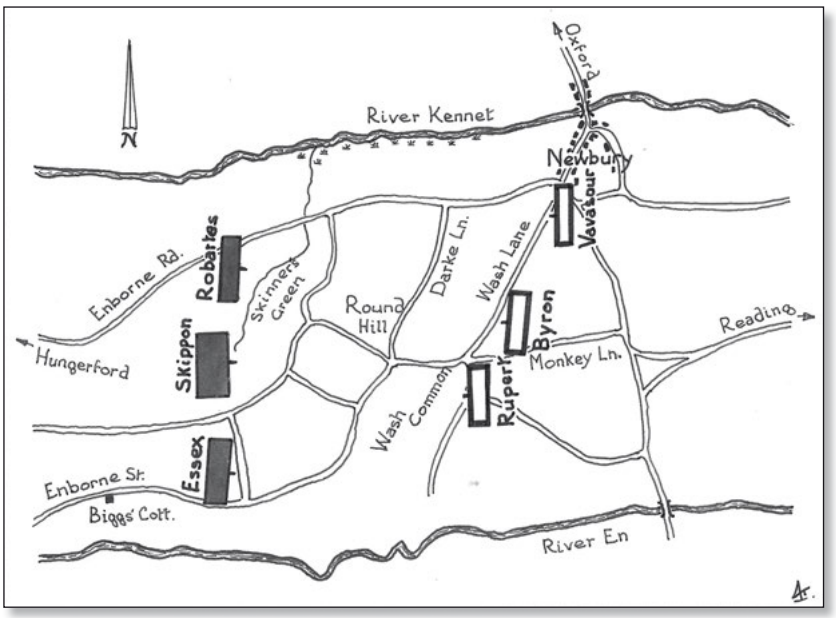
Essex divided his army into four tactical elements.

The divisions of Essex's Army at First Newbury

- **The right under Essex**
- Essex with the Foot
- Stapleton the Horse
- **The Centre under Skippon**
- Skippon with the Foot
- Meyrick the Artillery
- **The Left under Robartes**
- Robartes with the Foot
- Middleton the Horse
- **The Reserve under Brown and Mainwaring**
- Brown with the London Foot
- The Baggage Train

As to a battle plan, Essex chose to feint at the town with Robartes and his left and threaten the royal lines of communication with Oxford. But this force would halt and hold his left in the area of Guyer's Field in the northern sector of the field. Robartes' left flank was to rest on the Kennett, whilst the main attack with Essex's own command went in on the right up and onto Wash Common; it was to be a right hook to open a route to London. This plan needed Skippon in the centre to act as a pivot, and the senior parliamentarian officers saw the high ground to the southeast of Skinner's Green as being the key to such an action, especially the promontory called Round Hill. It was accessible by a road (now called Cope Hall Lane) which led directly onto the northern part of Wash Common, and to Monkey Lane and thus the route to Reading. Essex planned to make his punch across the Common on the right, whilst Skippon held the central hill. Once Essex had secured the army's exit across the Common, Brown and Mainwaring were to come up the hill and feed over the baggage and then the Reserve. Then Robartes' command would withdraw from the left and follow suit, marching behind the original line of battle to the bottom of Round Hill behind Skippon where they would

swing east and up the lane to the Common. Key to the success of this plan were Cope Hall Lane, which led to the north of the common, Wheatlands Lane which led to its centre and a third lane to the south now called Enborne Street, which gave access to the south of the Common. These were the three essential transport routes which had to be taken, defended and utilised if the army was to have an easy passage to Reading.



First Battle of Newbury. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

The ground up to Wash Common was a rolling mixture of enclosures and scrubland with these direct routes across the various spurs. There were also dense copses and innumerable banked hedges with ditches flanking fields and lining sunken lanes, which meant bodies of troops could move concealed from the enemy. However, these hedges also impeded deployed movement and the fighting styles employed by both armies. The battlefield drills and minor tactics of both Foot and Horse required space and unimpeded ground in which to manoeuvre. Although nearer to Newbury itself, the enclosures were more numerous and much smaller, and the whole area was still criss-crossed by lanes and hedgerows. The more open fields of the northern sector were useful if not perfect, but formal battalia operations would be restricted in the centre and the south apart from on the common itself. However, it was splendid country for commanded muskets and dragoons, and for those officers who could fight companies and troops rather than regiments i.e. those who could make use of the enclosed ground by jamming lanes with pikemen, use lateral lanes as defensive fieldworks for musketeers and line approach hedges with dragoons. It would also suit those who understood combined arms: using infantry to secure or cut gaps in hedges and then provide a protective bridgehead or zone of fire cover for the cavalry to file through and deploy in the fields. With dragoons covering the flanks, the Horse would then advance and take the ground which the Foot, accompanied by light guns, would come up and hold. Working together, a combined arms force could make Essex's plan work and due to his staff work, that combined force was well organised.

Essex's Army at First Newbury

Lord General	**Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex.**
Lieutenant General of Horse	Philip Stapleton
Sergeant-Major General of Foot	Philip Skippon
General of Ordnance	Sir John Merrick

Right Wing: Lord General Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex
Right Wing First Line
Lieutenant General Sir Philip Stapleton's Brigade of Horse

1. The Lord General., Earl of Essex's Lifeguard Troop of Horse (Robert Hammond)
2. The Lord General., Earl of Essex's Regiment of Horse
3. Lieutenant General Sir William Balfour's Regiment of Horse
4. Colonel John Dalbier's Regiment of Horse
5. Colonel Arthur Goodwin's Regiment of Horse (Gilbert Blare)
6. Colonel Edmund Harvey's Regiment of Horse
7. Colonel Richard Norton's Regiment of Horse
8. Comm. General Sir James Ramsey's Regiment of Horse
9. Scout Master General Sir Samuel Luke's Regiment of Horse
10. Captain Jeremiah Abercrombie's Dragoons
11. Captain Cornelius Shibborne's Dragoons

Right Wing Second Line
Colonel James Holborne's Brigade of Foot

1. Colonel James Holborne's Regiment of Foot
2. Colonel George Langham's Regiment of Foot
3. Colonel Francis Thompson's Regiment of Foot

Colonel Henry Barclay's Brigade of Foot

1. Colonel Henry Barclay's Regiment of Foot
2. Colonel John Holmstead's Regiment of Foot
3. Colonel Thomas Tyrell's Regiment of Foot

Unbrigaded*
Lord General Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex's Regiment of Foot

Centre and Left Wing: Sergeant-Major General Philip Skippon
Centre First Line
Sergeant-Major General Philip Skippon's Brigade of Foot

1. Colonel Sir William Brooke's Regiment of Foot
2. Colonel Sir Henry Bulstrode's Regiment of Foot
3. Sergeant-Major General Philip Skippon's Regiment of Foot

Second Line
Unbrigaded*
Col Sir William Springate's Regiment of Infantry

Left Wing First Line
Sergeant-Major Richard Fortescue's Commanded Muskets

Left Wing Second Line
Colonel John, Lord Robartes' Brigade of Foot

1. Colonel Sir William Constable's Regiment of Foot
2. Colonel Francis Martin's Regiment of Foot
3. Colonel John, Lord Robartes' Regiment of Foot

Colonel John Middleton's Brigade of Horse

1. Colonel John Middleton's Regiment of Horse
2. Colonel Hans Behre's Regiment of Horse
3. Colonel Bazil Fielding, Earl of Denbigh's Regiment of Horse
4. Colonel Lord Grey of Groby's Regiment of Horse
5. Colonel John Meldrum's Regiment of Horse
6. Colonel James Sheffield's Regiment of Horse

Reserve
Sergeant Major General Randall Mainwaring's City of London Brigade of Foot

1. Sergeant-Major General Randall Mainwaring's Regiment of Foot
2. The Red Regiment, London Trained Bands (William Tucker/ Robert Davies)**
3. The Blue Regiment, London Trained Bands (Francis West)**
4. The Red Regiment, City of London Auxiliaries (Samuel Harsnett)
5. The Blue Regiment, City of London Auxiliaries (John Warner)
6. The Orange Regiment, City of London Auxiliaries (Thomas Gower)

General of Ordnance Sir John Merrick.
The Field Battery of Artillery ***
Sir John Merrick's Company of Firelocks

* Unbrigaded regiments were not usual unless they were set aside for specific tasks. The Lord General's Regiment was similar in strength to the other two infantry brigades in the Wing. The size of Springate's has not yet been discovered.

** One line of thought puts them with Essex

*** Although it is not known which guns were drawn up in the grand battery it is probable they were the heavier pieces of ordnance.

The parliamentarian train consisted of:

Heavy	Medium	Light
2 demi- culverins	4	14 guns including drakes

Essex had left most of his heavier guns in Gloucester to aid the defence of the city. It seems as if he had a few medium guns with him that formed the battery on Round Hill but his 20 or so light pieces were, according to period practice, probably spread along the line to accompany the Foot and increase their firepower.

The story of the battle on 20 September is beyond the scope of this work but we recommend these particular volumes for those who wish to study the action in detail:

- Barratt, J., *The First Battle of Newbury* (Stroud, Tempus , 2005).

Sir Philip Stapleton, engraving by Bullfinch. (Turton Collection)

- Day, J., *Gloucester & Newbury 1643* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2007).
- Scott, C.L., *The Battles of Newbury* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2008).

Although bitter and hard contested, the outcome of the fighting was indecisive and with nightfall both sides drew apart. Sporadic shooting and skirmishing took place well into the night, the glow of matches and the sporadic flash of small arms served to show each side where the other lay, but by midnight they had totally disengaged. Byron states 'about 12 o'clock at night drew off all our men as if we had been the beaten party'.[19] The royal army retired back to its camp down Wash Lane and back into Newbury. Byron was highly critical of this decision calling it 'another very great error' and complaining that they had 'quitted all our advantages … '[20] The Army Councils on both sides met that evening and discussed the state of their armies, and their options for the next day. Casualty returns were not collected and estimates vary, but it would appear that Essex's army had lost around 500 killed and less than 1,000 wounded, whereas the king seems to have lost about 1,000 killed and over another 1,000 wounded. Charles is known to have lamented the loss of Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland, his Secretary of State and of Robert Dormer, Earl of Carnarvon, and had their bodies retrieved and laid in state. Essex was recorded as spending much of the night visiting his wounded.

The battle was a success for the parliamentarian forces. They had fought the king's army to a standstill and more importantly they, especially their Horse, had not run. Sir Philip Stapleton who commanded Essex's Right Wing of Horse had engaged Rupert's famous Oxford Horse and for a time had driven them back. Even when they were finally overwhelmed and forced to retire he rallied them and held them in reserve rather than permit them to flee. It was the first time in a major battle that Essex's Horse had not been severely beaten.

Moreover although he had failed to secure the road to Reading, Essex's strategic plan was still feasible and his soldiers seem to have expected the battle would continue the next day and loathe to give up the ground they had taken, they virtually camped where they stood, making best use of whatever cover they could find and make-do shelters they could erect. Despite post-battle fatigue, little provisions and another miserable but thankfully dry night, their morale was strangely high: they had been held but not beaten, and inexperienced units had been bloodied and done well, even those Horse driven off by the superior royalist cavalry, had rallied and readied themselves to fight again. They were determined that the next day they would force their way through the enemy or die in the attempt, but it was a determination encouraged by lack of food and a rather desperate strategic position – it was long way back to Gloucester or even to run for Southampton. All this was a far cry from the royalist perception of a battle lost and too much powder

19 Clarendon MSS, 1738.
20 *Ibid.*

expended. Added to this, various royalist senior officers, including Byron, severely criticised the decision to abandon the ground and even castigated the men.

At daybreak on 21 September Essex again roused and arrayed his men in battle formation, but this time they formed across the Common, facing north and occupying the ground so fortuitously left them by the withdrawing royal army. Essex had a gun fired to announce that they were ready to fight and offered battle for the second day. Rupert was all for accepting and barring their way to Reading with whatever force they could muster but he was out-voted in Council by members who argued that the ground was as unfavourable as it had been the day before when they could make little headway. The accepted story is that without sufficient powder the royalists could not accept the challenge and so the parliamentarians, still in battle array, began to prepare to withdraw. They must have warily watched and regretted they had not the stuff of war to fight them. Essex gave orders to local parishes to bury the dead and Sergeant Foster noted seeing about 100 corpses which had been stripped by looters.[21] Essex had his wounded loaded into wagons and, after brushing the enemy pickets aside and forming his army into column of march, made his way somewhat cautiously over Wash Common. We do not know which route the army took, Monkey Lane seems perilously close to the royal lines, but there was another road available a little distance south. Covered by the Horse, they slowly crossed Wash Common, and then marched to Greenham Common, halting several times and seeming to deploy for a fight when they faced some royalists under Wilmot who were shadowing them. This was a repeat of the tactics used previously during the march to Gloucester, daring the Horse to attack their Foot and guns, and done so as to ascertain the royalists' true intentions.

Given the reluctance of the king to order an attack, for whatever reason, it has been argued that Essex should have attacked and forced another battle but this does not seem to have entered his thinking as he maintained his campaign objective and fell back to his base. There is danger in 'what if' scenarios, but one can only imagine the casualties sustained if the king had fallen back into and obliged Essex to assault a fortified Newbury. Judging commanders with hindsight and armed with more information than they could ever acquire is not a rewarding pastime.

But Rupert was not one for giving up and he organised a pursuit taking much of his Horse with him, as well as Lisle's commanded muskets. Shortly before 4.00pm, in a narrow, hedged lane near Aldermaston, possibly at Brimpton, they attacked the tail of the parliamentarian column and caused some considerable damage and a near rout of the rearguard, made up of the London regiments. The incident ended spectacularly near 5.00 pm. when a powder wagon, having spilt its load when it was rolled over in the panic, suddenly ignited. In the resulting confusion the Londoners divided. Some went up the road away from the fray whilst others were apparently enraged and went back, advancing against their foes. Rupert's men withdrew, and one account implies that they left several colours or cornets' behind them. Again the fighting had been vicious and bitter; Rupert had three horses killed

21 Foster, op.cit.

under him, and having been very frightened by this ferocious attack, the Londoners were in no mood to take prisoners. Foster says they killed fallen men like dogs, knocking out their brains with their muskets.[22]

Essex took stock of the situation and patched up the disaster as best he could then pressed on in his march. The army crossed to the north bank of the Kennet at Padworth and then marched into Theale about 10.00 pm. that night. On Friday 22 September they continued to Reading which they entered, and were met with great rejoicing.

By 26 September Essex himself was in London. His reception was ecstatic, with the streets strewn and hung with laurel and the cry of 'Hey for Old Robin' apparently on everybody's lips. By 28 September the majority of Essex's army had retired to quarters in and around Windsor and the earl was feted by the capital's crowds with the London Brigade very much the heroes of the hour as it joyfully entered the city in triumph. However, records state that the Londoners' numbers were somewhat reduced; having marched out with around 4,400 they returned with some 3,300, although that included absentees as well as casualties.

Essex and his army had not only relieved Gloucester, stormed and taken Cirencester, driven Rupert off at Albourne and fought the king to a standstill at Newbury, but had also come safe home.

22 *Ibid.*

PLATE A

1. Pikeman
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

2. Musketeer
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

PLATE B

3. Dragoon
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

4. Trooper
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

PLATE C

5. Cuirassier
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

6. Harquebusier
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

PLATE D

7. Ensign
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

8. Drummer
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

PLATE E

9. Matross of the Bridging Trayne
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

10. Colonel of Foot
(See colour plate commentaries for full caption.)

PLATE F

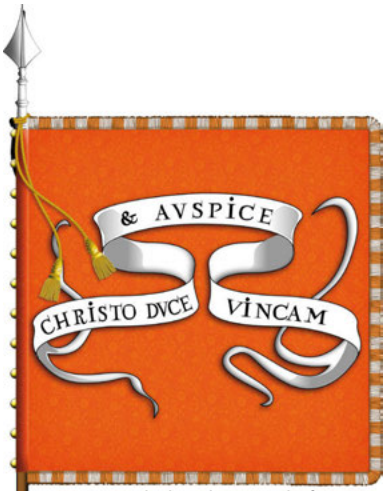
11. Model of Cavalry Trooper of Essex's own regiment, by Anthony Barton, and used with his kind permission.

12. Model of Cavalry Trumpeter by Anthony Barton, and used with his kind permission

PLATE G

Flags

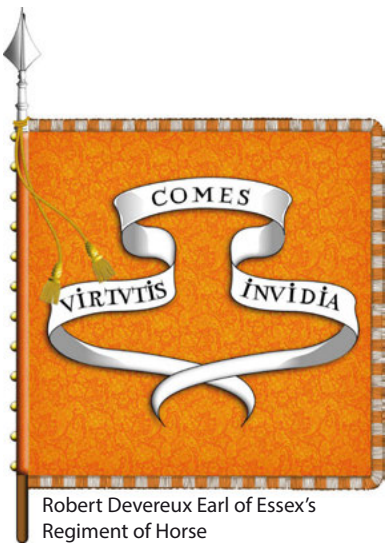
Col Arthur Goodwin's Regiment of Horse



Captain Nicholas Chute, Earl of Essex's Regiment of Horse

James Holborn's Regiment of Foot, 2nd or 3rd Captain

London Trained Bands Red Regiment, 3rd Captain

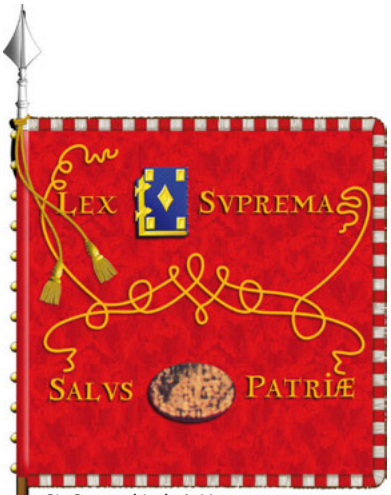


Robert Devereux Earl of Essex's Regiment of Horse

Robert Devereux Earl of Essex's Regiment of Foot

PLATE H

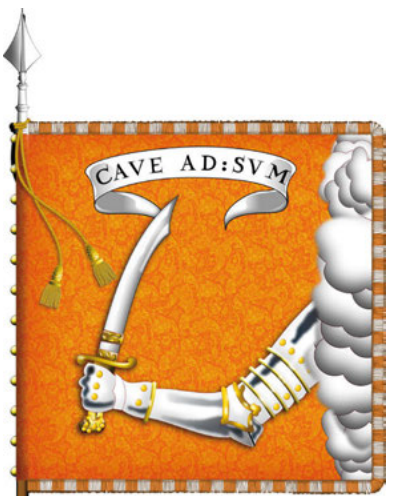
Flags



Sir Samuel Luke's Horse

Sir William Balfour's Horse

Thomas Lord Grey of Groby's Horse



Sgt Major John Gunter, Earl of Essex's Regiment of Horse

William Fiennes Lord Saye and Sele's Regiment of Foot, 1st or 2nd Captain

William Russell Duke of Bedford's Horse

8

The Thames Valley Campaign, Spring 1644

The opening weeks of 1644 found Essex's army in winter quarters, most of the infantry billeted in Aylesbury, St Albans, Windsor and Newport Pagnell, 'a warm nest for a soldier in winter'.[1] Unfortunately there had also been another outbreak of camp fever but not on the same scale as they suffered at Reading. The Horse was more widely dispersed with a force based on the Hampshire/Sussex border keeping a watchful eye upon Hopton's army across the snow-covered Downs. Essex himself had returned to London to consult with Parliament about recruiting and the supplying of his forces. He was also dealing with problems stemming from the commission he had been made to grant to Waller which he considered gave the major general too much independence. After much wrangling, Parliament acceded to Essex's demands that Waller should take orders from him – but only after Essex threatened to resign. Although this technically sorted things out, the jealousy between the two commanders continued to fester beneath the surface.

In more open events, Essex attended a number of public meetings and on 18 January he took part in a thanksgiving service before joining a procession with a large guard of honour made up of units of the City Trained Bands to dinner at the Merchant Tailors' Hall. Despite all the disagreement and arguments of 1643, it would seem he was still popular with the worthies of the City.

The next morning under the Treaty of Assistance, the first contingent of the Scottish army under Lord Leven crossed the border into England as Parliament's allies, an action which was to have profound consequences on the future progress of the war. A few days later the king called his own royalist parliament together at Oxford where peace negotiations were debated. This resulted in letters being prepared and sent by Lord Forth by a trumpeter directly to Essex who replying on 30 January stated,

> That he received the Letter and Parchment from his Lordship, but having no address to, nor acknowledgment of the Parliament, he could not communicate

1 Davis, G. 'The Parliamentary Army Under the Earl of Essex 1642-45', *English Historical Review 39, (1934)* Quoting Mercurius Britannicus 23 October 1643.

Alexander Lesley, Lord Leven, from an old engraving. (Turton Collection)

it to them. That in maintenance of the Parliament and Privileges thereof, they all resolve to spend their blood as the foundation of our Laws and Liberties.[2]

This was a different man who had been criticised so roundly and so frequently for being too open to making peace. Accompanying this reply, Essex sent Forth a copy of the National Covenant.

With the Scottish army now serving on English soil, Essex felt that they should come under his overall control but the Scots commander-in-chief Alexander Lesley, Lord Leven, would have none of it. To manage this problem the old Committee of Safety was dissolved and a new governing body set up called the Committee of Both Kingdoms. This consisted of fourteen members including Essex and Waller and also four Scottish Commissioners. It met for the first time on 18 February 1644.

The campaigning season was now approaching fast, so on the night of 28 February, Essex issued the following proclamation,

> It is his Excellency's will and pleasure, and I do hereby straightly charge and command all Officers, and other Soldiers, as well Horse, Foot and Dragoones belonging to the Army under my command, forthwith after Proclamation, made hereof, to repair to their several Quarters upon paine of death.[3]

This was normal practice for, during the winter months, many troops took leave of absence so that they might return home for better shelter and food. That is not to say that units were left completely ineffective, particularly those in the frontline outposts where there was constant bickering between neighbouring hostile garrisons. Aylesbury, for instance, had suffered an abortive royalist attack after an unsuccessful attempt to subvert the governor, Colonel Aldrich and his deputy Lieutenant Colonel Mosley of Tyrrell's Regiment. Aldrich retaliated by an attack on the royalist position at Hilesden House with 400 musketeers, but had to withdraw for lack of cavalry support, the troopers having refused to march until they were paid. In a letter to the Speaker, Colonel Aldrich described his men thus, 'some much behind in their arrears are not able to feed their bellyes nor clothe their nakedness, they may well be called ragged regiments'.[4]

On 26 March, two days before the above letter was written, Parliament passed an Ordinance stating that their armies were to be remodelled. It stated that their major force,

> [their] … Army, under the immediate Command of the Earl of Essex, should consist of 7,500 Foot, besides Officers, (to be disposed into seven Regiments,

2 Whitlock, Bulstrode, *Memorials of English Affairs During the Reign of King Charles the First* (1682), pp. 77.
3 Jones, S. F. (ed.), *Mercurius Civicus Number40,* pp. 60 (Tyger's Head Books, 2013).
4 The Bodleian Library Tanner mss Volume 62 f.582.

> whereof the Generals to contain fifteen hundred Men, the rest a thousand a-piece, and every Regiment to be divided into eight Companies and no more) and three thousand Horse, besides Officers in six Regiments, each consisting of five hundred Troopers, devided into six Troops; the Colonel's to have a hundred Troopers, and the other five Troops four score a-piece. And that for the maintaining of This Army and a suitable Train of Artillery, and other incident Charges, there should be monthly raised and paid, the Sum of thirty thousand five hundred and four Pounds out of the Excise etc.[5]

This remodelling involved the disbandment of some regiments, changes of commanding officers in others, as well as the transfer between armies of several units. Whitlock commented on the lord general's army that by this ordinance, 'thereby his officers were discontented and himself [Essex] not well pleased'.[6] This was an understatement, for when Essex heard of what he thought a far more generous settlement, given to the Earl of Manchester's army, he sent a remonstrance to Parliament saying so in no uncertain terms, however he concluded his protest with, 'if it be your pleasure, I will, as I have several times already, advantage my life for the service of this cause'.[7] This was a clear indication of the type of man he was.

Whilst Essex had been involved with these parliamentary matters, some of his units had been actively engaged in a number of operations. Commissary General Behre had been sent with a small cavalry brigade to assist in the delivery of ammunition, arms and reinforcements to the still hard-pressed garrison of Gloucester. Behre was to rendezvous with local midland forces around Warwick on 14 March, but the presence of considerable enemy concentrations in the area delayed the operation, and his supplies had to be slipped through on horseback in dribs and drabs under cover of darkness. Behre eventually reached Gloucester, but the Foot reinforcements he had been escorting had been reduced to only fifty men by this stage, and he and his troopers seem to have offered very little assistance to Colonel Massey when they got there. By the time Behre and his brigade returned to base, the only thing they seem to have achieved was a reputation for bad behaviour and looting. Indeed regional commander Basil Fielding, Earl of Denbigh, complained bitterly to the Committee of Both Kingdoms about them, singling out Behre's troop, who were mostly Dutch, as being amongst the worst.

In the southern counties a more successful campaign was being waged by Lieutenant General Balfour. Essex had agreed to support Waller in countering the threat from Hopton's army which was assembling in the Winchester area, by sending Balfour with a strong cavalry brigade to his aid. It consisted of the regiments of Balfour, Dalbier, Meldrum and Middleton, augmented by a detachment of 753 mounted infantry under Colonel Adam Cunningham. This last unit is unusual and the table below shows its reconstructed makeup.

5 Rushworth, John, *Historical Collection, 1618-1649, The Third Part: Volume the Second,* (London, 1691) p. 653.
6 Whitlock, Bulstrode, op.cit., p. 80.
7 Devereux, Walter Bourchier, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex* (John Murray, 1853), Chapter XVI, p. 392.

Table 8.1: Constituent elements of Cunningham's mounted infantry

Regiment	Captain	Lts.	Ens.	Sgts.	Drums	Corps.	Soldiers	
Cunningham	Richbell	2	2	20	16	26	233	
Holmstead	Birkenfield	-	-	6	1	6	25	
Thompson	Reade	-	-	1	-	2	11	
Tyrell	Bisco	2	2	8	2	9	99	
Constable	-	2	2	6	3	6	74	
Martin	Martin	1	1	2	1	3	50	
Langham	Collingwood Harrison	1	1	10	4	12	94	
Totals	7	8	8	53	27	64	586	**Total 753**

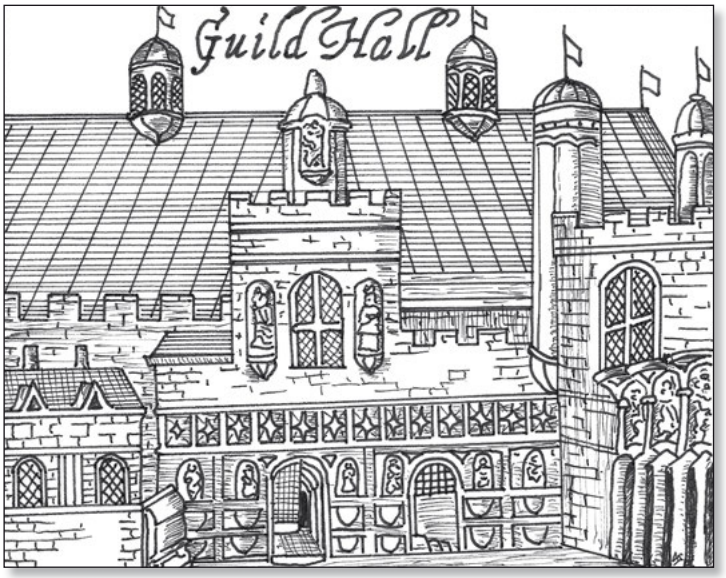
Source: Surviving pay warrants in the National Archive, SP 28 series.

View of Cheriton Down, site of the 1644 battle, viewed from Waller's headquarters at Hinton Ampner House. (Photo by Alan Turton)

It is interesting to note the sixteen drummers from Cunningham's own regiment. Of the men, one can only presume they were experienced soldiers gathered from other amalgamated units who could also ride, and whom Cunningham wished to employ. These mounted infantry were drawn from seven of Essex's foot regiments, five of which were to disappear during the coming reorganisation of his army. Balfour's force, along with two London Trained Band regiments, under Richard Browne joined Waller and contributed in the convincing victory over the forces of Hopton and Lord Forth at Cheriton in Hampshire on 29 March.

During the action, Colonel John Meldrum was killed and Quartermaster General Dalbier was wounded, but considering that Cheriton was a day long hard-fought action, casualties amongst the parliamentarians were light. Balfour spent a few days in pursuit of the defeated royalists, capturing General Lord Forth's wife in her carriage near Newbury. Lady Forth was allowed to keep her considerable quantity of plate and jewellery and was given an escort to Oxford, but other valuables were deemed prizes and nearly two hundred prisoners were taken. Balfour then returned east to rejoin Essex's main army, where there was controversy brewing over an alleged remark made by the earl in the House of Lords. This stemmed from the fact that Essex still smarted from not being given overall control of all army operations in England and was supposed to have said that the newly arrived Scottish army should be sent home. Commissary General Behre inflamed

the situation by using bad language about the honour and reputation of the Scottish nation. He later denied saying anything of the sort and claimed the remarks had been made up by hostile forces trying to drive a wedge between the allies. However Colonel John Middleton, a Scot, would have none of this, calling Behre a poltroon before resigning from Essex's army along with fellow Scottish officers, including Colonel James Holborne. They all offered their services to Waller who was happy to accept them. Essex's army was once again in need.



The Guildhall, after an engraving of 1643 redrawn by Alan Turton. (Turton Collection)

On 8 April, the Lords and Commons met with the City of London leaders in the Guildhall to impress upon them the need to send wheat and all possible supplies and provisions as well as recruits and money to Essex for the completing of his remodelled army. The infantry numbers at this time, excluding officers, NCOs and drummers were exceedingly low, and were as follows:

Infantry Regiments April 1644

Lord General's Regiment	698 men
Colonel Thomas Tyrrell's Regiment	297 men
Colonel Edward Aldrich's Regiment	(?)
Colonel John Lord Robartes' Regiment	363 men
Sergeant Major General Philip Skippon's Regiment	258 men
Colonel Adam Cunningham's Regiment	233 men
Colonel Harry Barclay's Regiment	(?)
Colonel William Davies' Regiment (formerly James Holborne's Regiment)	196 men

It should be noted that Essex managed to retain eight regiments, not the seven ordered. However, that Skippon's had been a large regiment with over 1,000 men in the previous campaign is an indication of how serious the manpower situation had become. They needed an influx of recruits, either men fresh to service or drawn in from units being stood down.

Regiments stood down or left Essex's army in the reorganisation during April/May 1644

Colonel Francis Martin's Regiment	80 men
Colonel Sir William Constable's Regiment	216 men
Colonel George Langham/Samuel Carlton's Regiment	148 men
Colonel Francis Thompson's Regiment	139 men
Colonel John Holmstead's Regiment	(?)

The Horse too underwent reorganisation. The regiments of Horse were each trimmed of their company of dragoons, with the exception of the Lord General's Horse, which retained Abercrommy's unit. This was the only company of regular dragoons left in the entire army. There is no clear evidence of what happened to the disbanded dragooners but they were probably taken into the retained regiments of both Foot and Horse.

Despite absorbing the disbanded units, it was still difficult to fill the ranks of the surviving regiments without resorting to large scale impressments. The Venetian ambassador reported home that the recruiting stations in London had been shut for lack of volunteers. During these upheavals, the Committee of Both Kingdoms ordered Essex to rendezvous with the Earls of Manchester and Denbigh at Aylesbury on Friday 19 April for a planned general advance upon Oxford. However, Manchester was tied up in Lincolnshire and Essex's army was still too weak to take the field unsupported, so the order was rescinded. A new plan was drawn up and the Committee requested from the Common Council of London that three regiments of City Auxiliaries (technically 4,200 men, but probably fewer than 3,000) should be sent to reinforce Essex. This was agreed on 9 May and so on 18 May, a brigade consisting of Sergeant Major General Whitchcott's Green City Auxiliaries, Colonel Gower's Orange City Auxiliaries and Colonel Owen's Yellow City Auxiliaries joined Essex's field army. This force had already begun marching, with its train of artillery, on 1 May, and by 9 May was at Wickham near High Wycombe. Waller had been ordered to mobilise his army near Farnham and to join with Essex, both generals leaving their respective quarters in London early on the morning of 14 May to join their commands. By 17 May Essex was with his army at Henley where he ordered his pioneers to repair the damaged bridge over the Thames. He was also joined by Colonel Venn's Regiment of Foot from Windsor, its place as the garrison of the castle being temporarily taken by companies of the Berkshire militia.

With this impressive build up of forces aimed at Oxford, it was decided by the royalist Council of War, held at Marlborough, that it would be necessary to reinforce their capital. Prince Rupert was away in the north with a considerable force drawn from the Oxford Army, and so Lord Forth suggested the evacuation of Reading, thus allowing the release of its 3,000 strong garrison to bolster the defences at Oxford. Initially the king prevaricated, but on 18 May he personally led the Reading garrison out towards Oxford, leaving the defences of the town slighted, and Caversham Bridge broken behind him. Charles left a sting in the tail however, by leaving Colonel Hawkin with 300 men in garrison at Greenland House, just two

miles from Henley, thus affording the royalists some control over passage of the Thames. A number of Essex's senior officers went to view this royalist outpost and were shot at from a distance. Essex however, according to Mercurius Civicus,

> … intends not that that house shall interrupt or make him deferre his march to Oxford, though the enemy in that house sent a very insolent message unto him, to desire him to call as he went that way: to which he returned answer, that he would not only call but knock.[8]

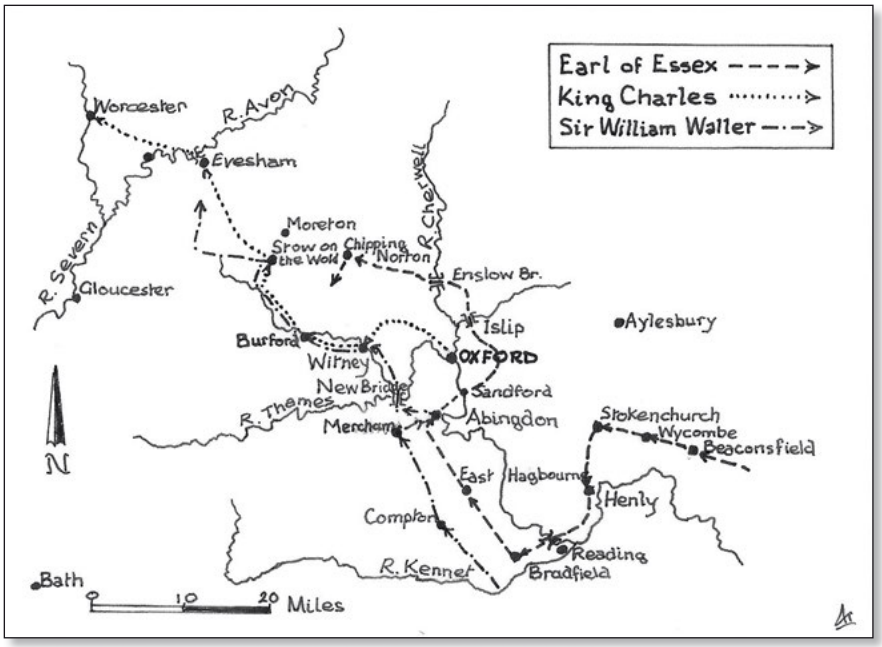
On 21 May, Waller, whose troops were now on the march, came to Henley to hold conference with Essex and discuss future strategy on the reduction of Oxford. Shortly afterwards, Essex's scouts reported the evacuation of Reading, so the earl immediately dispatched a flying column to secure the town as well as engineers to repair the bridge. This he crossed with his main force on 23 May, and entered the town which was now, finally, to stay in parliamentarian hands for the rest of the war.

Essex's next objective was Abingdon, upon which he began to march the following day through Bradfield, camping that night at Blewberry and East Hagbourne. The next morning, to everyone's astonishment, scouts brought the news that the royalist garrison at Abingdon had pulled out after hearing of the approach of Lord Robartes with Essex's advance guard. Upon entering Abingdon on 26 May, Essex issued a proclamation throughout his army, forbidding plundering upon pain of death, and announcing that, 'these countries have been much afflicted and oppressed by the enemy, and we now come to relive of them of their base bondage'.[9] According to the king's Secretary at War, Sir Edward Walker, these events had 'enforced his Matie to draw his Army on the North side of Oxford, there to feede on his Owne Quarters and (the best he could) to keepe himselfe from being beseidged'.[10] When news of these bloodless triumphs reached Waller's army, still marching up from the south, there was much jubilation amongst the soldiers who had been trudging through torrential rain for some days. The summer of 1644 was to be a very wet one.

Waller's army had now come up and had been instructed to cover Oxford on the western side whilst Essex covered the east. Meanwhile the Londoner, Sergeant Major General Richard Browne, with county forces drawn from Buckinghamshire and Berkshire was to be installed in Abingdon and Reading and Colonel Venn's' Regiment returned to secure Windsor.

Essex began his part of the pincer movement on 28 May, by crossing the Thames at Sandford Ferry where his army spent the night. The next day's destination was Islip, the road to which took the army over Headington Hill in full view of the defenders of Oxford, which was probably a deliberate choice aimed at undermining their morale. Essex made a halt at Bullingdon Green and with a small party of Horse, came within cannon shot of the defences

8 Jones (ed.), S. F., *Mercurius Civicus Number 52,* p. 128 (Tyger's Head Books, 2013).
9 Rushworth, John, *op. cit.,* p. 670. Obviously he means 'relieve'.
10 Walker, Sir Edward, *Historical Discourses upon Severall Occasions,* (London, 1705), folio. 12.



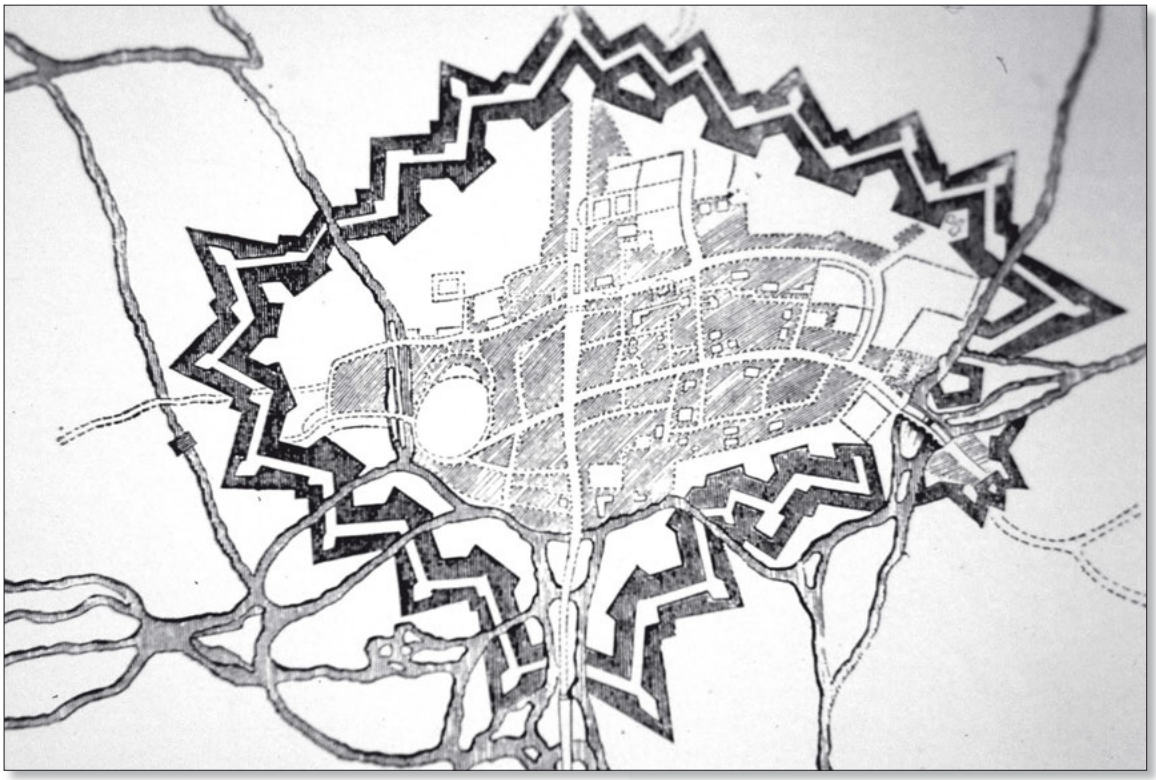
The Oxford Campaign 1644. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

to take a view of the works. His cavalry spent some hours riding up and down in bravado to show off their numbers, so as to impress the watching defenders including the king himself who observed the march from the top of Magdalene College Tower. As mentioned before many of the Oxford colleges were taken over by the royalist military: the king established his court at Christchurch whilst Magdalene served as the barracks for Rupert's Regiment of Horse. The city was also now well fortified, being now almost surrounded with earthworks, ditches and drawbridges.

By evening, after some minor skirmishing, the army lay encamped at Islip, which became Essex's headquarters for the next couple of days. The king, following the advice once more of Lord Forth (newly ennobled to the Earl of Brentford), positioned the majority of his Foot in villages around the north of Oxford, whilst the bulk of his Horse lay at Cassington, thus keeping open an escape route.

Essex's next move was an attempt on Oxford from the north, which necessitated his taking the crossing of the river Cherwell at Gosford Bridge. The bridge was defended by royalist musketeers who succeeded in holding their position all day. In the evening they were pulled off to support an abortive attempt to regain Abingdon, but their disappearance was thought by Essex's men to be a trap, and no attempt was made to cross the bridge. In the hours of darkness, the royalists returned under the command of Sir Jacob Astley, who had them throw up earthworks in which he mounted two six-pounder guns. Fighting continued all the next day, but no progress was made despite Essex sending up four pieces of artillery to support his infantry.

Although the fighting at Gosford went on for a further two days, Essex decided to broaden his front and made assaults on two other possible crossings further up the river; at Enslow Bridge and Tackley Ford using elements of his own army and the London Auxiliaries. The royalists fiercely contested these crossings, emplacing two six-pounders and a demi-cannon at the bridge and putting musketeers in a mill which flanked the ford. The assault started at day break, and continued until the initial attackers ran short of powder and shot. They were relieved by a fresh party under Sergeant



Plan of the Oxford defences, engraving after A. Wood. (Turton Collection)

Major General Skippon, who kept up the action for the rest of the day. The royalists, according to Mercurius Civicus,

> … being on the other side of the river did stand to it with much resolution, and having advantage of the ground, cut off the bridge and kept the passage all that day; not withstanding several attempts were made against it, it was not taken till the Lord's Day in the afternoon.'[11]

The capture of the bridge had cost Essex at least 40 men, plus a number of officers killed and wounded, the most senior of which was Colonel Adam Cunningham, whom, we are told, had his arm shot off by roundshot and is reported to have held up his good arm, and said, 'I have another Arm, yet left to fight for the Parliament'.[12] He died shortly afterwards.

Meanwhile, Waller had succeeded in crossing the Thames at Newbridge, which he managed to take after several attempts by outflanking its defenders by the use of punts. Early reverses had resulted in Waller's men taking out their frustration upon Abingdon which they looted and also smashed its famous market cross.[13] When news of Waller's crossing of the Thames reached the king, he held a Council of War at Woodstock, where it was

11 Richard Collings, Jones, S. F. (ed.), *Mercurius Civicus Number54,* p. 139 (Tyger's Head Books, 2013).

12 Rushworth, John, op.cit., p. 671.

13 It can only be supposed that Waller seeming to permit this atrocity was seen by Essex as a deliberate direct contradiction of his previous edict.

decided to withdraw the troops defending the Cherwell crossings back to Oxford, to where the king also returned. To cover their withdrawal during the hours of darkness the royalist Foot used the old ruse of leaving burning match-cord on the defences which deceived Essex's men into thinking they were still manned. Daylight revealed the truth. The net around Oxford was gradually tightening. However, before Essex and Waller could close around the city, the king made up his mind not to be trapped within their cordon, especially as the city had supplies for only a fortnight. He decided to pull out with the best part of his army that night and make for the west. 3,500 Foot and a Regiment of Horse were left under Sir Arthur Aston to defend the city and feints were made towards Abingdon and Wallingford to confuse the parliamentarians. The king's plan worked to perfection, and he was well on the road to Burford before Essex, who had just received a welcome reinforcement of Colonel Harvey's London Horse, was given definite information of what was happening. The lord general immediately set out in pursuit, bringing his main army over Enslow Bridge, and quartering that night at Woodstock.

During this march, the army had to endure a raging hail and thunder storm, which turned the road to a quagmire. This so dispirited the men, particularly those of the City Auxiliaries, that it was reported by royalist newsbooks that there were large scale desertions. Waller's forces were also on the move through the rain, and although hindered by damage done to Newbridge, by the night of 4 June, had reached Whitney. That same evening the king was at Bourton-on-the-Water and Essex, slowed by his large train, was moving towards Chipping Norton. The next day according to the royalist Captain Richard Symonds,

> The King and all his army marched over Cotswold downes and Broadway hills, and came to Evesham, his owne garrison, where young Colonel Knotsforth is governor; which was the first night's rest of our army.[14]

Here the king had intended to prepare for a stand against Essex, but, panicked by false information that Waller was also close at hand, withdrew to Worcester. He left behind a party with the task of pulling down the bridge, which was only done at the cost of the lives of over twenty of his men.

By 6 June, Essex was at Chipping Norton and Waller had pushed up to Stow-on-the-Wold. That morning, Essex called Waller to a conference; their first meeting since Henley. Essex had received urgent requests from the Committee of Both Kingdoms to send a relief force to the aid of closely besieged Lyme Regis. Waller assumed, because of his previous service in the West Country, that he would lead this expedition whilst Essex continued pursuit of the king into the Midlands. Essex however had other ideas, declaring that he would go himself into the West.

Why did Essex make this decision? It was probably obvious to him that the king, with a much more mobile and lighter force could continue to lead himself and Waller a merry dance throughout the midlands until he wore

14 Peachey, S., (ed.), *Richard Symons The Complete Military Diary* (Leigh-on-Sea, Partizan Press, 1989).

out both armies. The lord general's army had a much heavier train of artillery, with its supporting wagons and tumbrels, and far more Foot than Waller. The only roads capable of taking this sort of traffic in seventeenth century England were generally, with the exception of the London-Chester road, to be found south of a line from the Wash via Gloucester to Weymouth. Other roads were unsuitable and rendered even less so by the wet weather. Essex gave Waller with his more mobile forces, the responsibility of shadowing the king, and preventing Charles from interfering in this new western project. Waller was obviously disgusted at being excluded at what he considered his realm of influence, but he returned to his army resolved, 'to follow the King wherever an army can march.'[15]

The decision having been made, Essex immediately sent off a dispatch to the Committee of Both Kingdoms telling them what he planned to do and why. He concluded his communication,

> I have therefore applied myself to the relief of Lyme, which, seeing you so recommended it to me, I durst not undertake with less than an army … my desire being only, to the best of my understanding, to approve myself for the advancement of the public service, and of my being your humble servant,
>
> Chipping Norton, 6 June 1644
> Essex.[16]

Essex's Thames Valley Campaign was over, and he and his army were bound for the West Country.

15 *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series, Charles I. 1644,* (London, 1888), p. 211.

16 Devereux, Walter Bourchier, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux Earls of Essex* (John Murray, 1853), Chapter XVI, p. 399.

9

The Lostwithiel Campaign, Summer 1644

The relief of Gloucester had been a resounding success and even the Battle of Newbury had seen Essex's army fight the king's forces to a standstill and gain the moral and strategic victory. In 1644 Essex's star was again in the ascendant. It suffered a little by yet another comparison with Waller because of his victory at Cheriton over Hopton, although Essex had 'lent' him Balfour and his Horse to help him achieve this victory. In the previous chapter we dealt with how the exigencies of war forced Essex to meet with Waller to decide upon a strategy for dealing with the two major royalist threats in Southern England. One was the king's Army of Oxford loose in the south midlands and the other was Prince Maurice's Army deep in the south west besieging the port of Lyme Regis and threatening Plymouth. It was decided that whilst Waller would focus his attention upon the king Essex would march west, although this decision, largely driven by Essex, did not sit comfortably with Waller nor did it meet with Parliament's approval.

Essex rapidly drew his forces together and began their march to the West Country from Stow-on-the-Wold, stopping for the night of 7 June at Burford. The next day, rather than taking the direct route – south via the Thames crossing at Lechlade – Essex moved east, crossing the river at Radcot and quartering at Faringdon. This may have been done to continue threatening Oxford or in order to take supplies from the usually Royalist occupied area, however the next day the army was back on course and quartered in the Lambourn valley. The following night Essex billeted himself on the royalist Marquis of Hertford's house at Tottenham Park near Great Bedwyn, and the next at his own house in Amesbury. Meanwhile Balfour and Stapleton were sent ahead with a force of cavalry to clear Salisbury of some 200-300 royalist Horse, who at their approach, fled towards Blandford in Dorset.

Essex himself reached this Dorset town by 14 June, according to the royalist Sir Edward Walker seeking along the way to win local support,

> endeavouring by counterfeit civily to draw the people to his party and speak truth of him and his army, they were not guilty of those barbarous and ungentlemanlike qualities which most of Waller's army are possessed withal.[1]

Essex indeed had been successful in raising southern Wiltshire to the parliamentarian cause, leaving behind Captain, promoted to Major, Henry Wansey of Robartes' Regiment to co-ordinate locally raised forces which soon consisted of five companies of Foot and two troops of Horse.

At Blandford, however, Essex received notice of the Parliament's displeasure at his actions in a letter, which stated,

> The Houses of Parliament do therefore think fit and direct that your Lordship forthwith do send a considerable Party of Horse to Lyme … and your Lordship shall receive further Directions, of the Committee of both Kingdoms, speedily. [2]

The committee also sent word that it, 'conceives Sir W Waller's forces enough for the West.'[3] The Earl angrily answered these dispatches,

> I conceived that you were not displeased with my march, because you were silent for eight days, which I took for approbation, but now having advanced as far as Blandford in Dorsetshire, you direct me to make a stand, and send away a considerable party of horse for the relief of Lyme Regis. Give me leave to believe that you are misinformed of late, or else I had not received, such an unexpected countermand after my unwearied endeavours in pursuance of such instructions as I received from your own hands.

Essex explained that a party of horse would be inadequate to carry out the relief as, 'the enemy's strength of horse is far beyond that which you speak of … ' He was adamant that it would take a combined force to defeat Maurice. He went on to say of Waller,

> If you think fit to set him at liberty, and confine me, be pleased to make him General and me the Major of some brigade, that my soldiers may have free quarter, free plunder, and fair contributions besides, as his have without control. Finally, that army which has the greatest strength of foot will be most able to reduce the west, and I believe that I have the most resolute foot in Christendom; take heed how you disaffect them, for if you lose them, either by commending me to lie still, or putting them upon ordinary services, which are below them, you will repent too late and I too soon. If you encourage me to advance further into the west, I hope in a reasonable time to relieve Lyme Regis and distress Weymouth, but if you call back Sir Wm Waller from pursuing the King, and stop me in my march to the west, we are like to lose the benefit of both armies this summer …

He concluded,

1 Walker, Sir Edward *Historical Discourses upon Several Occasions* (London: 1705).
2 *Journal of the House of Lords, VI* p. 588.
3 *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Charles I, 1644*, p. 223.

Robert Rich, Earl of Warwick, Lord High Admiral, a contemporary engraving. (Turton Collection)

> Consider what I have said, and if by following your advice, the west be not reduced, Hopton's army be recruited, and Lyme Regis lost, let not the blame be laid upon me … [4]

Later that day, Essex entered Dorchester unopposed, and there received the good news that Lyme was relieved.

In the seventeenth century, Lyme Regis in Dorset was an important commercial port on the south-west coast, and strategically it commanded the shipping route between the Channel and Bristol. Early in the war it had declared for Parliament and was garrisoned. In March 1644 the king sent Prince Maurice into the West Country to force Lyme to surrender. Maurice began the siege in April and as well as bombarding the town, made several attempts to storm it but Lyme and its governor Colonel Thomas Ceeley resisted all efforts to take the place. With Essex getting nearer Maurice abandoned the siege on 16 June and fell back towards Exeter leaving garrisons in Taunton and Bridgwater. Essex's initial campaign objective had been achieved quickly, and essentially without loss.

However the ease with which he relieved Lyme encouraged Essex to plan for a further move into the West, aiming at first to take Somerset and then Devon – the task that Parliament had intended for Waller. Believing that his rear would be protected by Waller shadowing the king, he was influenced into contemplating invading Cornwall too, and was encouraged in this by the blandishments of Lord Robartes. Robartes was a Cornishman who held estates near Bodmin, and he swore that the Cornish people would welcome and support him. Essex's determination to ignore Parliament's instructions and relieve Lyme himself rather than send Waller had been rewarded with outright success, so he communicated his intention of going even further west to the Committee of Both Kingdoms, being possibly more malleable than Parliament.[5]

Being a Sunday, the army rested in Dorchester for the day, although Essex sent out a strong body of Horse under Balfour to confirm the situation at Lyme. On his return journey Balfour demanded the royalist garrisons at Melcombe Regis and Weymouth surrender to him but the governor, Colonel William Ashburnham initially refused, although he had already begun to withdraw part of his force to Portland Castle. Later four burgesses from the two towns came to Essex to treat for surrender and after some debate they agreed to yield upon quarter. The next day at 2.00 pm. what was left of the royalist garrison, about 400 men, was allowed to march out without arms, and it was ordered that the citizens were to bring to the town hall all the weapons and ammunition they could find. A general search was made the next day, and it was recorded that,

> … taken near a hundred Pieces of Ordinance, great and small two thousand Muskets, one thousand Swords, and one hundred and fifty Case of Pistols, two hundred Barrels of Powder and about sixty Sail of Ships of all sorts in the Harbour.[6]

4 *Calendar of State Papers Charles I, 1644*, pp. 232-234.
5 Essex was a member and everyone on the Council knew him.
6 Rushworth, John., *A Continuation of Historical Collections.* Vol II, p. 683

Lord Robartes, from a contemporary engraving. (Turton Collection)

In losing Weymouth the king lost his most important and easterly port on the south coast without a shot being fired.

On 19 June the Earl of Warwick's squadron anchored in Portland Road and the lord admiral came ashore to hold consultations with Essex who was now in Weymouth. Warwick wrote that day to the Committee of Both Kingdoms suggesting the lord general should advance further west to prevent the royalists from forming an association of the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and Dorset and forcing many country people to join them. He also suggested Parliament should set up its own committees in various parts of Dorset to support the cause, as few gentry had come forward to help Essex because they feared his army would soon be withdrawn and they would be left defenceless. By forming committees they could oversee the raising and maintaining of their own local defence force. Likewise the lord general wrote to Parliament listing his reasons why he should continue his march west, 'assured by the Lord High Admiral that the Western Counties will flock in from all parts to our body … ' and that, 'Plymouth men will take the field with Two Thousand Five Hundred Foot and Horse, and fall upon the rear of the Enemy whilst we charge them in the Front.' He concluded, 'that my Advance will (in all human reason), by the Blessing of Heaven be effectual for the preserving of Lyme, breaking the Enemies Association and reducing the West.'[7]

Parliament debated these dispatches on 25 June, and sent, according to Rushworth, a 'somewhat harsh' reply to Essex, upbraiding him for his remarks in previous letters to the Committee of Both Kingdoms.[8] However, they added that they, 'would have your Lordship to take all Advantages of the Enemy, and use your best Endeavours for reducing the West … '[9] Essex had not waited for a reply, and had already prepared for a continuation of his campaign bolstered by support from Warwick, who told him that as the army moved by land, he would sail be sea and assist in clearing the Western counties. The warships, *James*, *Constant-Reformation* and *Expedition* along with some lesser ships were allocated to the task. Plymouth was to be relieved by a combined naval and military operation.

To consolidate Weymouth, Essex had made Dorset man Colonel William Sydenham its new governor, whose first task was to set about strengthening its fortifications. The nearby Henrician Sandersfoot Castle was summoned by Essex and after three hours, surrendered, but the castles of Portland and Corfe held firm, as did the fortified town of Wareham where Prince Maurice had posted around 500, mostly Irish, troops. Essex did not want to be delayed by sieges, so left it to Sydenham to deal with these places with his local troops, whose numbers were swelling with volunteers. Essex himself addressed a speech to 300 of them, which was received with applause. To bolster this new force, Essex detached Captain Robotham's troop from Sheffield's Horse and the Yellow Regiment of the City Auxiliaries with the assurance that he would not willingly call them away from Weymouth. This was the first of several detachments which would gradually weaken his army. He was now slowly

7 *The Journals of the House of Lords VI* p.603.
8 *The Journals of the House of Lords VI* p.683.
9 *The Journals of the House of Lords VI* p.684.

marching onwards via Bridport and Crewkerne, avoiding the war-ravaged area around Lyme, to Chard in Somerset to show the flag within that county.

The marches were quite slow so as to rest the cavalry which had seen much hard riding so far on the campaign. On 24 June Essex arrived at Chard, staying for six days during which time he received Parliament's official acceptance of his plans for conquest of the West. A Council of War was called to discuss the army's next moves, one of which was to attempt the royalist garrison in pro-Parliament Taunton. Essex issued orders to Sir Robert Pye to make an attempt on Taunton, assisted by newly promoted Colonel Robert Blake, who had made a great contribution as part of the garrison in the defence of Lyme. They took with them Pye's Regiment of Horse and a detachment of Blake's Foot from Lyme. Another plan debated was the capture of Exeter where Queen Henrietta Maria lay recovering from the birth of her last child, and requests were sent to Warwick for the loan of two demi-cannons and two culverins for the purpose. Young and Holmes suggest that Essex's move deeper into the West was the temptation to capture the queen.[10] Although this may have been the political 'icing on the cake', the conquest of the West was a far more strategic military goal. The primary immediate objective was much more likely to be the relief of Plymouth.

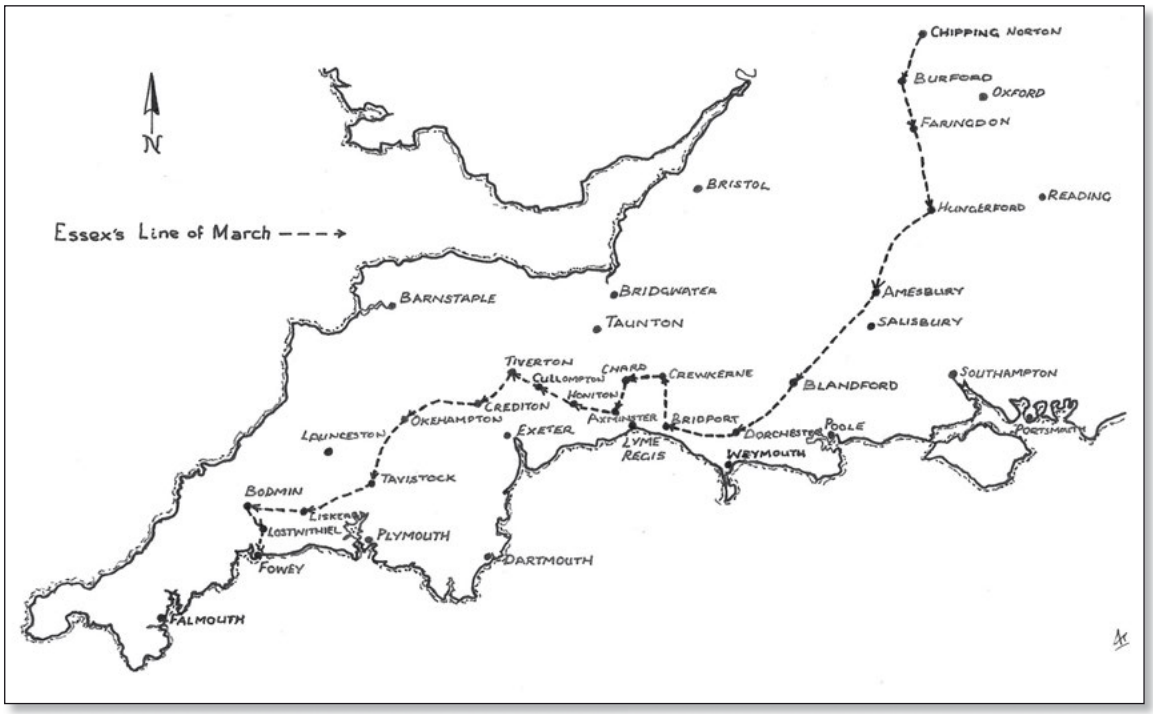
The royalists under Sir Richard Grenville had begun besieging Plymouth in March 1644 and by June it was apparent that, like Lyme, the parliamentarian garrison had constructed adequate defences and they and the inhabitants were managing to keep supplied, mainly by sea. Grenville and his royalists were making little headway, and it seemed that Exeter similarly would be a tough nut to crack for the parliamentarians.

Whilst the lord general's army rested, an action took place in Oxfordshire, which was to have a disastrous effect upon the campaign. On 29 June, on the banks of the river Cherwell at Cropredy Bridge, Waller suffered a reverse at the hands of the king's army. The defeat caused the collapse of morale in Waller's forces, mutinies broke out, and many deserted their colours. Although he held on to a hard core of regiments and troops, Waller's fighting army ceased to exist, and with it went the protection of the western expedition's rear. Waller had attacked when he was meant to be a threatening force and the scale of this disaster was to have serious implications for both himself and Essex. The danger now facing the lord general was not at first realised by Essex or for that matter by Parliament, so with Parliament's blessing he continued his advance westward, entering Devon on 30 June.

Essex's army reached Tiverton on 3 July, and quartered there for over two weeks, during which time news came of a successful pro-Parliament revolt amongst the inhabitants of Barnstaple, who were now in need of assistance.[11] Essex immediately dispatched a brigade of three regiments of Foot and two of Horse under the command of Lord Robartes, who reached the town on

10 Young, P. and Holmes, R., *The English Civil War, A Military History of the Three Civil Wars* (London: Eyre Metheun, 1974), p.204.

11 In a letter of 3 July Essex mentions that the Queen had left Exeter, which could be proof that her capture was not a prime reason behind his march deeper into the West. *CSPD. 1644*, pp. 303-304.



Essex's March to the West Country. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

4 July where they were, 'cheerfully entertained'.[12] Robartes spent ten days in Barnstaple setting up a new garrison under Devonshire man Colonel Lutterall with elements of the local trained bands. To stiffen the garrison, on his departure, Robartes left behind from his brigade three companies of Foot: Captain Spooner's (Robartes Regiment), Captain Needham's (Barclay's Regiment), and Captain Deane's (?).

Whilst lingering at Tiverton, awaiting the return of Robartes, Essex received the welcome news of the great allied victory at Marston Moor on 2 July, and also of the success of Pye and Blake's detachment in taking Taunton on 8 July. They had sat before Taunton for only one week before its garrison commander, Sergeant Major William Reeve of Stawell's Regiment surrendered. He and his garrison were permitted to march out but left behind a demi-culverin, six 'murderers', eighty muskets and pikes, two tons of match, eight barrels of powder and a great quantity of bullet, plus a powder mill and an array of provisions including wheatmeal, oatmeal and two loads of cheese plus other valuables.[13] Essex's troops were even more cheered by the arrival, on 15 July, of £20,000 for the army's pay.

Colonel Robert Blake, from an 18th century engraving. (Turton Collection)

Essex also had the backing of his senior officers for his invasion of the West; thirteen of them signed a letter to Parliament expressing their full support. Things were looking good for Essex but he was just becoming aware that Charles, now unfettered from Waller, had turned his army westward with the intention of rescuing his queen from what looked like an imminent siege

12 Cotton, R., *Barnstaple and the Northern Part of Devonshire during the Great Civil War 1642-1646*. (London: Unwin Bros., 1889), p. 279.

13 TT. E. 254. (3). A murderer was an old-fashioned artillery piece usually constructed of bound iron hoops and mounted on a heavy garrison carriage.

Horsebridge, the gateway to Cornwall. (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

of Exeter – although she was in no need of such a rescue. Essex had in fact, given up on the idea of besieging that royalist stronghold, but had, tongue-in-cheek, sent a trumpeter to its governor, Sir John Berkeley, stating that if Marston Moor was a great victory for Prince Rupert as the royalists were claiming, he, Essex, would surrender Weymouth and Melcombe Regis. This was providing that if Rupert was defeated, Berkeley would engage to surrender Exeter. Berkeley refused the wager.

Essex also busied himself trying to raise more troops, but found that although Devonshire countrymen were supposedly eager to join, he was short of arms for those that did, and moreover soon became aware that the new recruits were reluctant to serve under anyone other than Devonian officers. He had been told that he would be joined by '1,000 or 1,200 men' but they 'were not above 200 in all'.[14] These were men brought in by local man Colonel John Weare. He had success in raising a small regiment of Foot and a few Horse, but he had little time to train them. On 17 July, Lord Robartes' command rejoined the main body, and the army prepared to march against Prince Maurice who lay about Okehampton. However, before they began to move out the next morning, disturbing news was brought to Essex that the king had already reached Bath with his army. Essex called a Council of War, where it was decided that, still under the misapprehension that Waller was still able to contain the king, they had time to continue in their pursuit of Prince Maurice and relieve the siege of Plymouth.

The Council was not unanimous, despite the officers' earlier letter of support,

> … there was great debate at the Council of War, whether they should march on westward, or face about and meet the King, who was marching towards them, and rather fight with him than with Prince Maurice. Most of the Council were of the opinion to face about and meet the king but the Lord Roberts was very earnest for them to advance into Cornwal … affirming that when they came into Cornwal, which was his lordship's countrey, they should find great assistance and many to come in to them, by his interest amongst them.[15]

14 *CSPD. 1644*, (London, 1888), pp. 350-352.
15 Bulstrode Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs …* (London, 1692), p.92.

The army moved off, slowed by its train of over 350 wagons, first through Crediton then Bow which was reached on 21 July. On hearing of Essex's advance, Maurice withdrew his 7,000 troops to Exeter, leaving Okehampton to the earl's men who entered the town on 22 July before then moving on to occupy Tavistock on 23 July. The next day, Colonel Pye's Regiment, coming to rejoin Essex from Taunton, brushed successfully with some retreating royalist Horse near Okehampton. Meanwhile the king was moving much faster than Essex and on 26 July, joined with Maurice near Exeter.

Essex's decision to march further west and not to turn and face the king needs examination. With hindsight it is easy to see that fighting one army in Devon would have been a better military solution to his problem, rather that moving into the restrictive funnel that was Cornwall where he had to fight three – the king's, Maurice's and Grenville's. In his defence he must have believed Robartes, that the county would rally to him, the major towns would open to him and men and provisions would come flocking in, moreover he had the promise of Warwick that what he could not get off the land he would get from the sea and his naval support fleet. He also believed Waller still capable of threatening the king's army's rear and cutting its lines of communication, thus depriving them of provisions and drawing off substantial forces to counter the threat, both of which would weaken them. If all went horribly wrong, Essex also had a fall-back plan in that Warwick's ships could take his army off from the many small ports along the south Cornish coast. All this was also set against the backdrop of his rivalry with Waller and his desire to prove himself the right man for the job in the West. For better or worse he chose to move even further west.

Tuesday 26 July was to be a fateful day for Essex for it was the day he invaded Cornwall. The previous two days had seen his presence force Grenville to lift his blockade of Plymouth and withdraw across the Tamar, leaving only a detachment of about 150 men to defend his own house at nearby Fitzford. This outpost was quickly stormed by a party sent by Essex, the victors only too happy to pillage the home of the turncoat "Skellum" (meaning *the vicious beast*) Grenville. The practice of pillage and vandalism was becoming more widespread amongst Essex's troops despite his best efforts to prevent it, and it became worse when they entered Cornwall, mainly because the Cornish were not as well disposed to the parliamentarian cause as Robartes had promised.

Robartes, having been the chief advocate of the invasion in the Council of War, led the spearhead of the advance. Essex had drawn out elements of Plymouth's garrison to strengthen the army and these were put under Robartes' command for the forcing of the crossing of the Tamar at Horsebridge. They consisted of about 1,500 men made up of detachments drawn from Colonels Carr's and Rouse's Regiments of Foot and the cavalry regiment of Colonel Leighton. Grenville contested the crossing for some time but was eventually pushed aside and withdrew to Truro, having lost about 200 men in the action compared to Robartes' losses of about 40 or 50. As the rest of the army triumphantly followed, Essex sent Colonel Sir Philip Stapleton on a mission back to London with a letter to explain to the Committee of Both Kingdoms the reasons for this further advance. He considered this of such import that

he sent a detachment of his own regiment of Horse to escort Stapleton on his journey. In his letter, Essex stated,

> I being drawn to this place of Plymouth, which is now accomplished, and being advised to march westward into Cornwall to clear that country and settle the same in peace, I have thought fit to send up Sir Philip Stapleton, and with him Mr Herbert, one of the Commissioners appointed for my army, to give you an account … [16]

Pursued by Robartes, Grenville fell back to Launceston and then to Bodmin which he also abandoned, leaving behind … two brasse peeces … and 50 barrels of powder'.[17] He withdrew further westward to Truro. By 28 July Essex had caught up with the main army, and the Bodmin stores were gratefully absorbed by the parliamentarian train. As the army rested for a few days in Bodmin Essex began to take stock of his situation and he began to realise that things were not going well. Despite Robartes' optimism that Essex would gain vital support from dormant parliamentarian sympathy amongst the Cornish population, the contrary was happening. The men were not coming in.

> … the people of the Country were summoned to surrender themselves to my Army, but the enemy having before deceived them with false reports concerning our army, there are not many come in, and through many Townes and Villages where my Army passes there is none but women and children left.[18]

Another problem was that Essex's intelligence reports were also becoming scarce. His scouts were denied information by the locals, and he seldom had accurate news of where the king's army lay or indeed what was happening with Waller's army. Unbeknown to Essex, this force no longer existed. Since his dishonourable defeat at Cropredy Bridge, Waller had not been able to pull his army back together. He had formed a mounted brigade of about 2,000 men out of what he could muster from his cavalry under John Middleton which was dispatched westward. Middleton's advance was slow, and inexplicitly, he first went to Newbury to attempt Donnington Castle but to no avail and of no use to Essex either.

Even the London news books began to publicly cry out for assistance to be sent to Essex, Mercurius Civicus for instance declaring, 'it is much desired that Sir William Waller, or some other might be sent thither with a considerable party of horse to attend the rear of the King's Army … '[19]

By 2 August Essex had information that the king was less than 20 miles away, forcing him to abandon his original plans of taking Truro or Falmouth. Although told the king had crossed the Tamar into Cornwall the day before, he was also given false information that the royal army was a mere 7,000

16 *C.S.P.D., 1644,* p.379.
17 TT. E. 4. (14).
18 TT. E. 4. (32).
19 Richard Collings, Jones, S. F. (ed.), *Mercurius Civicus* (Tyger's Head Books, 2013).No. 63. 1-8 August 1644.

strong. Believing he was still in a commanding position, he now decided to march south to the coast so that his army could make use of the promised support from Warwick's naval squadron. Essex decided to use the port of Fowey and hoped that there his men could receive much needed supplies of food and pay and make a stand until the expected relief force fell on the king's rear. He wrote to the Committee of Both Kingdoms on 4 August that, 'Then we can sell our lives at as dear a rate as maybe, for I have never seen soldieries more willing to undertake anything nor to undergo wants with patience … '[20]

With his brigade, Lord Robartes was sent to occupy Fowey whilst Essex himself moved the main army, covered by a small rearguard of Horse left at Bodmin, into the little town of Lostwithiel. The small stone-built market town of Lostwithiel with its tall church spire and a fine medieval bridge which spanned the River Fowey, had a population of about 430 in 1641, and they were completely overwhelmed by the unwelcome incomers.[21] Essex then prepared a strong if extended front line of defence on the high ground north of the town running from Beacon Hill on the eastern side of the River Fowey, flanked by its tributary the River Lerryn, westward to the partially ruined but still formidable Restormal Castle. Respryn Bridge, half a mile north of the castle, was the last post on the line and to the west of it lay Lord Robartes' home, Lanhydrock House, where Essex set up his headquarters to await developments.

Meanwhile, the king had arrived at Liskeard where he lodged until 7 August. He had brought with him around 2,000 Horse, 5,000 Foot and 28 pieces of artillery to which was joined Prince Maurice's Western Army, bringing his total strength to around 16,000 men. To the west of Essex's positions lay Grenville's smaller force of around 1,800 Foot and 600 Horse. The royalists thus numbered some 18,500 whilst Essex had around 10,000.

On 4 August the first clash occurred between elements of the armies of the king and Essex, when acting upon intelligence received, 1,000 royalist Horse under Colonel Richard Neville, made a surprise attack upon Boconnoc House which was the home of Lord Mohun who was with the king and lay just to the east of Essex's security perimeter. It was occupied by several of Essex's officers who were enjoying its comforts and were at dinner and the raid took them completely by surprise. A number of senior officers were taken prisoner, including Colonels Aldrich and Barclay as well as Lieutenant Colonel Boteler of Essex's own regiment. Quartermaster General Dalbier, mistaken for a servant, managed to escape.

As the noose began to tighten around Essex's army, the king was persuaded, by some of his own senior military officers, to treat with the earl in an attempt to make him defect to the king's cause and on 6 August Lord Beauchamp, Essex's own nephew, was sent to him with a personal letter from Charles himself. The mission was a failure, Essex replying, 'That he would not Treat with his majesty, but bid him go to the parliament at Westminster.'[22] Essex was still maintaining he was bound by the commission he held from Parliament

20 CSPD. Charles I, p. 399.
21 Buck, C. *Walks Around Lostwithiel* (Lostwithiel, local publication), no page numbers.
22 TT. E. 10. (19):*Mercurius Aulicus, The 35 Weeke*

Restormal Castle. Source: Photograph – Nicola Turton

and would not break that commitment. Further clashes between patrols followed, one on 7 August on Braddock Down, the site of an earlier and larger encounter between Ruthven and Hopton on 19 January the previous year.

Despite this, further efforts to suborn Essex were pursued by the now-reorganised royalist high command, but on 10 August, they were refused by the adamant lord general stating yet again that ' … I, having no Power from Parliament (who have employed me) to Treat, cannot give way to it without breach of Trust.'[23] That same day Grenville fell upon the parliamentarian cavalry outpost at Bodmin and drove them out of the county capital before riding on to meet the king at Boconnoc House, which had, the previous day, been made the main royalist HQ. The fall of Bodmin had left exposed the parliamentarian detachment at Respryn Bridge, and thus forced them to withdraw to the main army at Lostwithiel. Grenville quickly took advantage of this by bringing his army, now reinforced by Lord Hopton with 2,000 foot and 1,000 Horse from Maurice's army, back across the Fowey to threaten Essex from the west again. By holding Respryn Bridge the royalists had open communications between east and west of the river and to add to Essex's discomfiture, on 12 August, Grenville took the now abandoned Lanhydrock House which he now made his HQ.

Essex established a good defensive ring around Lostwithiel. His left was anchored by his cavalry in Chark whilst his Foot held the high ground to the southwest of Restormal Castle plus the castle itself and the ford below it. More Foot held more high ground east of the river including the dominant Beacon Hill and a forward outpost on Druid's Hill, with cavalry again on the right flank. The king decided against the immediate storming of Essex's well-chosen positions as he knew the earl's army was now running short of food, being as it was cooped up in the confined area between Lostwithiel and Fowey. The weather also was worsening; a constant westerly wind brought heavy rain and was also preventing Warwick's supply ships from entering Fowey's harbour. This situation was made even worse when the royalist Sergeant Major General Astley moved south down the east side of the Fowey, and crossing the River Lerryn, took the lightly defended positions of Hall Barton and Polruan Castle which commanded the eastern bank of the Fowey estuary. By establishing guns at Polruan the royal army closed the river to sea traffic and even if the winds had permitted Warwick to come west, his ships would not be able to

23 TT. E. 8. (26):

reach Fowey. The port was now useless and, marooned on the west bank, Essex was left with the small coves around Polridmouth and Polkerris as his only access for relief from the sea, but then only by small boat.

Essex's other hope of relief was the force Waller had been persuaded to send under Middleton, which had at long last got as far as Somerset. However on 14 August, a detachment from it had been ambushed by Sir Francis Doddington near North Petherton. The ensuing rout communicated itself to the whole force and caused Middleton's entire brigade to retreat back to Ilchester and it was not until 27 August that they advanced into Devon, somewhat reduced in strength. By the end of the month they were in the area of Barnstaple in north Devon, and there they halted. They would play no further part in the relief of Essex's beleaguered army.

Essex knew nothing of this event, indeed on 16 August, he had written,

> Intelligence we have none, the country people being violent against us: if any of our scoutes or soldiers fall into their hands they are more bloody than the enemy.

In the same letter to the Committee of Both Kingdoms he said,

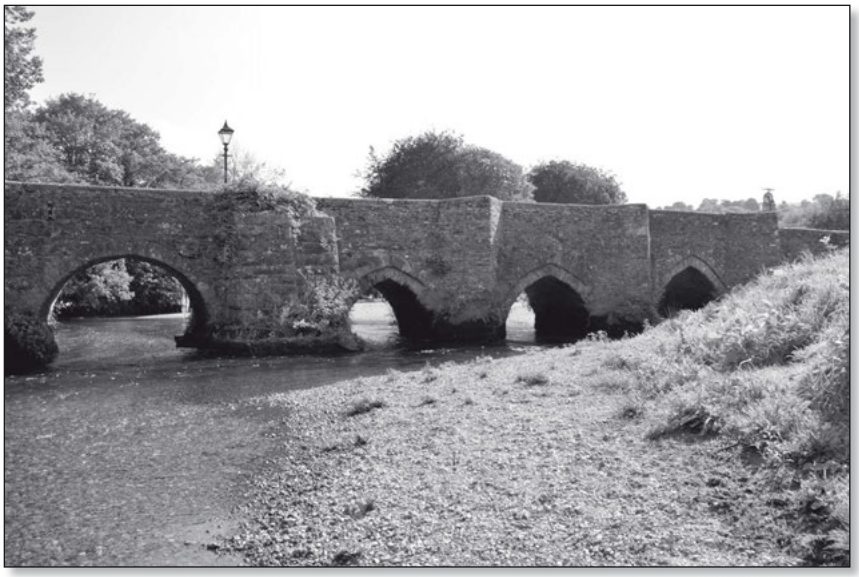
> If any forces had followed the King, as we expected, when we came into these parts, in all probability the war would have had a quick termination.

He added on his army's condition,

> Braver men I never knew, but this army being environed by four armies leaves us in great want of victuals, and the country so obstructed by passes, that we can neither force the enemy to fight except when they wish, nor march off ourselves. For aught I can perceive the enemy's intention is to starve us out, yet both our horse and foot keep their courage not withstanding the great extremity they are put to. The foot as yet have never engaged, but the horse skirmish daily, and invariably beat their opponents though they be three for one.[24]

The royalists, despite well organised supply trains and successful attempts to keep the local Cornish people on their side, realised that they could not sit indefinately in the fields around Essex's stronghold of Lostwithiel. On 18 August the king called a Council of War at Boconnoc at which it was decided that a general assault would be made simultaneously by all units upon the north and east fronts of Essex's positions. The attack was planned for the morning of 21 August and when it went in at about 7.00 am. it did so under the cover of morning fog. Grenville led a successful assault on the key position of Restormal Castle which dominated the centre of Essex's northern perimeter. The castle was held by the raw recruits of Colonel Weare's Devonshire regiment who, seemingly lacking specific orders, deserted the castle, panicked and ran. They were followed by those at the ford. At the same time, Prince Maurice fell upon the parliamentarian right, first driving in 400 commanded musketeers under Lieutenant Colonel Ingoldsby from their outpost at Druid's Hill and then forcing the whole of Essex's right flank based near Beacon Hill to fall

24 *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Charles I .1644.* p. 433-434.



Lostwithiel Bridge. (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

back to Lostwithiel. Essex's men, now half starved and fearing that they were cut off, appear not to have much stomach for the fight. The casualties numbered some ' … Forty persons in both Armies.'[25]

As the day wore on, Essex launched a number of counter-attacks, which were hindered by a lack of ammunition (there was a failed attempt by royalist saboteurs to blow up two of his powder wagons). By nightfall he had recovered very little ground and the royalists now held the hilly country overlooking the little town. He drew in his line and appears to have adopted another defensive position in and around Lostwithiel itself whilst still protecting his route to the coast.

According to local sources, during the night the attackers laboured to erect a battery and redoubt on Beacon Hill. Once guns were emplaced, either in this fortification or just on the hillside itself, they were used to bombard Lostwithiel and soon the cottages on the eastern bank of the town bridge were ablaze. For the next couple of days, there was very little fighting apart from the continuing bombardment, and the royalists could see no movement in the town. This made them suspect that Essex had withdrawn his main body to Fowey, which in turn led the king to plan an advance. On 25 August, extra cavalry were sent across Respryn Bridge to reinforce Grenville's force on the west bank but before they were deployed, scouts reported that Essex had in fact not retreated; his troops were merely sheltering under cover from the fire from Beacon Hill. On hearing this, the king postponed the attack and rethought his strategy. The next day he sent 2,000 Horse and 1,000 Foot under Lord Goring to St. Blazey to block any attempt Essex might make to break through to the little port of Par and to deny him any chance of gaining forage for his cavalry and baggage animals. To counter this move, Essex sent Quartermaster General Behre with his regiment along with his own and the Plymouth regiments of Horse and 500 commanded musketeers to cover this western flank. They were soon engaged in skirmishes and prevented Goring's attempt to turn the flank.

However, Essex's position was becoming untenable. There was no sign of Warwick, they were under frequent artillery fire, ammunition was low, food supplies almost used up and the royalists lay within musket shot of their lines. Now aware that Waller was not coming, on 27 August he wrote to Parliament expressing his concerns.

25 Sir Edward Walker, *Historical Discourses* (London 1705), p.67.

> … had I known that Waller, who was to attend the King's army, wanted either power or will to have a care of it, no persuasion of those who are interested in these counties should have engaged me so far in a country so ill-affected to the Parliament.[26]

The writing was on the wall and he seems to already be analysing where the blame for his impending defeat lay. Naturally he blamed Waller whom, although his scapegoat for his decision to come this far west, he accused of lacking the will to come to his aid.[27] However, he also understood how Robartes misled him.

On 30 August, he made the decision to instruct Lieutenant General Sir William Balfour to get all his cavalry, with the exception of the Plymouth Regiment, out to safety by breaking through the royalist lines under cover of darkness, whilst he withdrew the rest of the army south down the spine of the Fowey Peninsular. There he could more easily cover his flanks, and be closer to any possible evacuation point on the coast. Preparations were put in hand but towards evening two deserters were caught by the royalists and taken to the king's HQ at Boconnoc where they were questioned and revealed Essex's plans. The king immediately sent warnings out to his various outposts and to Goring at St. Blazey where the majority of his cavalry lay. He also sent a messenger to Sir Edward Waldegrave whose cavalry regiment was billeted near Saltash, to be on his guard and to break down all the bridges over the Tamar.

At about three in the morning of Saturday 31 August Balfour led his 2,000 or so Horse (including Cornish Parliamentarian officers who could have expected no quarter from their fellow Cornishmen) over Lostwithiel Bridge and into the darkness covered by a mist. He skilfully manoeuvred his column between the royalist Oxford Army and that of Prince Maurice, which were only a short distance apart, without raising the alarm until he was almost clear. The patrolling screen was too thin to be secure and the dragoons set to watch the Lostwithiel to Liskeard road are believed to have been drunk when the majority of the parliamentarian Horse rode by. A few shots were fired into the night but little or no harm was done. The royalists, despite their advance warning, remarkably had only the cavalry brigade of Lord Cleveland, numbering about 250 men, ready to pursue and they only managed to capture a few stragglers being instructed to observe and not engage with Balfour. The pursuit continued into the daylight with Cleveland's small command gradually being reinforced by stray troops of Horse from other units who had received the alarm.

The Horse escaped. Apparently Essex reasoned that there was little use in deploying the cavalry to hold the town, and it was not cavalry country. The terrain of the Fowey Peninsular was far too hilly with steep inclines and the plateau to the south of Lostwithiel was crossed with Cornish hedges which were thick and tall, and set upon solid banks of earth and stone much like the infamous *bocage* of Normandy. Rather than run the risk of having them

26 *CSPD., 1644,* p. 456.

27 Waller was at Farnham and did not actually set out west until early September by which time he had received news of Essex's surrender.

Castle Dore. (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

destroyed in a situation in which they could not function, he ordered Balfour to try and save them. He got them out but then had to get them to safety.

Balfour succeeded in keeping his tiring horsemen together as they rode in the direction of Liskeard, through St. Ives and then down the narrow lanes and through the little village of Pillaton towards Saltash. The lieutenant general left behind a small rearguard largely made up of Jeremiah Abercrommy's Company of Dragoons to slow down his pursuers, Abercrommy's men periodically making a stand, firing a volley and then retiring. As the fugitives neared the safety of Saltash they came under attack from more royalist Horse and some infantry drawn from Tremanton Castle. Abercrommy was eventually cut off from the main body and was trapped with 16 of his dragoons in the small village of Leigh. There they barricaded themselves in a house and made a final stand but were eventually taken prisoner by overwhelming numbers. Through competence of command on his part, and confusion on that of the royalists, Balfour had managed to bring the majority of his Horse to the shore of the Tamar Estuary and the Saltash horse-boats ferry. During the late afternoon, and early evening the boats carried and towed nearly 2,000 horses and their riders to the shelter of the Plymouth Garrison.

The lord general had no idea how successful Balfour's break-out had been, for he had been engaged in the most calamitous day of his career. From the early hours of the morning, his army had been withdrawing from its camp in Lostwithiel up and along the narrow hilly road to Fowey. Essex wrote,

> … the ways were so extremely foul with excessive rain, and the harness for the draught horses so rotten as in the marching off we lost three demi-culverins, and a brass piece, and yet the Major General fought in the rear all day, he being loathe to lose those pieces, thirty horses were put to each of them, but could not move them, the night was so foul and the soldiers so tired that they were hardly to be kept to their colours.[28]

By 7.00 am. it was clear to the king that Essex was indeed evacuating the town and there were signs that his men were attempting to demolish Lostwithiel Bridge. There is a local tale that some ill-disciplined parliamentarian soldiers

28 Rushworth, John., *A Continuation of Historical Collections* Vol II p. 702

Fowey harbour mouth and Polruan Blockhouse. (Turton Collection)

tried to blow up the parish church but recent research says the tower was damaged by the royalist bombardment whilst the setting off of gunpowder at its base was an unsuccessful attempt to smoke out several escaped prisoners who had taken shelter in the belfry. They did however, set fire to the town hall destroying many of the local records.

Charles ordered Goring and Grenville to advance from the West and sent a party of 1,000 Foot into the town to save the bridge and drive the remaining parliamentarians out. Skippon's rearguard stood on some rising ground south of the town covering the rest of the retreating army which was now out of sight. The king advanced with his Life Guard of Horse crossing the Fowey south of the town by a little known ford shown to him by an officer who was a local man. Charles ordered up artillery to bombard Skippon who was beginning to be flanked from the west by Grenville and harassed by the Life Guard on the east. Eventually Skippon, under threat of encirclement, made a fighting retreat back to Essex's new defence line which stretched across the high ground from east of Tywardreath, then north of Castle Dore and down to Golant on the shore of the Fowey. With the king pressing on the river side and Grenville doing likewise in the west, fighting raged all along this line.

By mid-afternoon, from this position, Essex put in a spirited counter-attack using his only remaining cavalry force consisting of the three troops of the Plymouth Regiment of Horse led by Captain Reynolds. They were backed up by the Lord General's Regiment of Foot and 100 commanded musketeers under Lieutenant Colonel Boteler who had, only the day before, been exchanged by the royalists. Initially the attack was a success, and two royalist Foot colours were taken which put much heart into Essex's men; but it was not to last. Increasing royalist reinforcements drove Essex's men back towards the old Iron Age hill fort of Castle Dore and on the western side recent finds of thousands of musket balls laying by the 'cannon proof' hedgerows above Tywardreath show the intensity of the fighting in the area.[29]

Skippon was later to claim that if he could have had a draft of fresher men from some of the less-threatened positions, he would have had a great advantage over the enemy; however, it was not be, for as Essex tried another counter-attack, his army began to falter. The men of Colonel Weare's regiment,

29 Peachey, S., (ed.), *Richard Symonds: The Complete Military Diary* (Leigh-on-Sea: Partizan Press, 1989), p.23. The Cornish banked hedges were known to stop cannon shot.

whom Essex was to call sheep, began to break and, 'ran from the field with their cannon and Colours' causing the neighbouring regiments of Robartes and Barclay to withdraw in confusion leaving a huge gap in Essex's line.[30]

Fortunately for the parliamentarians, it was growing dark and the royalists failed to take advantage of the situation. However, Essex's Regiment withdrew to Castle Dore trying to plug this gap but by doing so uncovered Fowey, thus relinquishing one of the army's main hopes of escape. The fighting had lasted all day, yet despite this, Sir Edward Walker wrote that he believed that there were fewer than 200 of both armies killed or taken prisoner.

As elsewhere in this book, readers who wish to make a fuller study of the progress of the two battles of Lostwithiel, both that north of the town and that around Castle Dore, should read a dedicated account. We do not hesitate to recommend: Ede-Borrett, S., *Lostwithiel 1644, The Campaign and the Battles* (Pike and Shot Society, 2004).

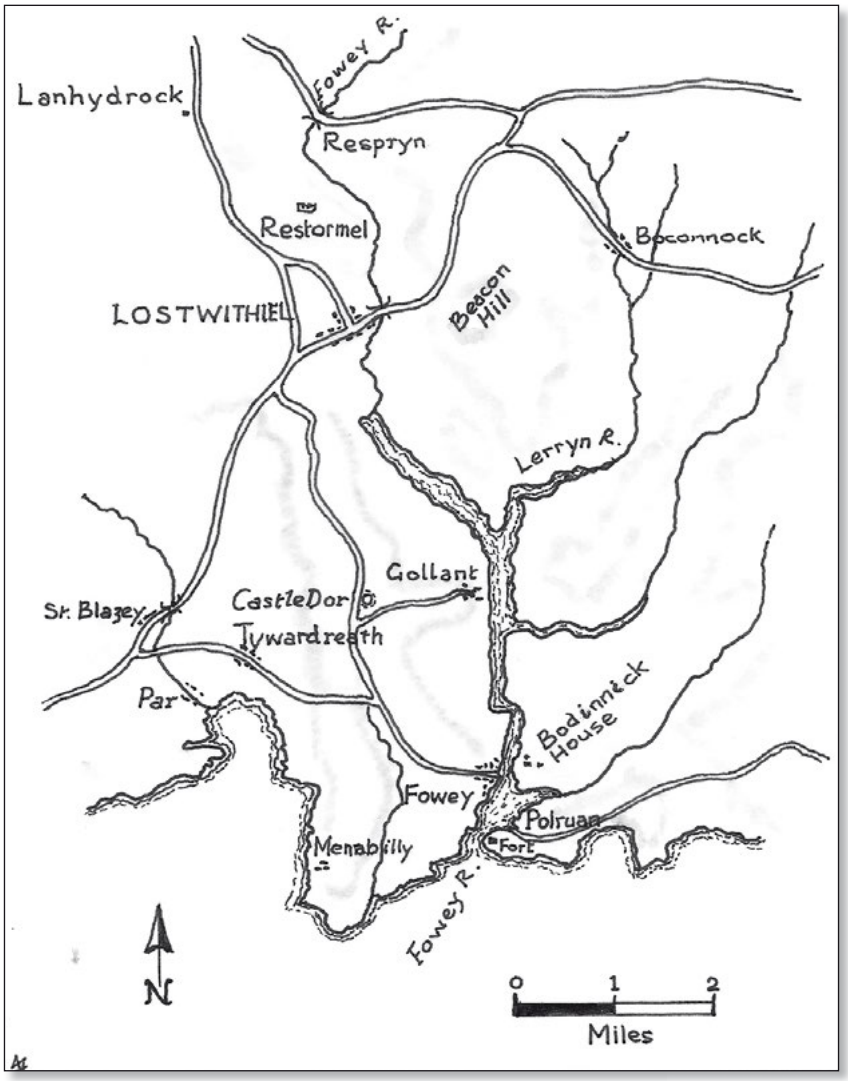
The casualties from both battles may have been low, but the spirit had gone out of Essex and his army, which his staff advised him was about to collapse. It was at this stage that Essex decided that he should look to himself. It is possible that this drastic action had been planned a few days before at a Council of War. As he was pondering this, he received messengers from Skippon asking what their next plan of action should be. Essex replied that Skippon should try to pull the army back to the area near Menabilly where there was still a possibility of evacuation from the beaches there. Skippon was however convinced that any attempt to fall back even further would see the army disintegrate. Failing such a retreat, Essex told him, to position the army around the train to obtain the best surrender conditions by using the threat of blowing up this valuable asset as a bargaining counter.

In the early morning light of Sunday 1 September, Essex along with Lord Robartes, Sir John Merrick and other members of staff, boarded a cock-boat (a ship's tender) and put to sea to meet one of Warwick's ships which carried them to Plymouth using the very winds which prevented them from sailing to his assistance. Mercurius Aulicus jeeringly reported, 'Onely wee desire to know the reason, why the Rebels voted to live and die with the Earle of Essex, since the Earle of Essex hath declared he will not live and die with them'.[31] Some of Essex's officers may well have thought the same when they were called to a Council of War later that morning by Skippon who addressed them thus,

> Gentlemen, You see our General and many of our Chief Officers, have thought fit to leave us, and our Horse are got away, we are left alone upon our defence: That which I propound to you, is this, That we having the same Courage as our Horse had, and the same God to assist us, may make the same Tryal of our Fortunes, and endeavour to make our way through our Enemies, as they have done, and account it better to die with Honour and Faithfulness, than to live dishonourable.[32]

30 TT. E. 10. (20): *Mercurius Aulicus. The 36 Weeke.*
31 *Mercurius Aulicus The 35 Week* Thomason Tracts E10.19.
32 Rushworth, John., *A Continuation of Historical Collections* Vol. II, p. 704

Despite this address, the majority of the Council disagreed with Skippon as they were dismayed at Essex's departure and knew their infantry were now exhausted, hungry, dispirited and thus incapable of making a break out. It was therefore concluded that they would treat with the king which they believed the army would welcome and whom they thought would accept their surrender with good terms.



Area of Operations Around Lostwithiel. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

Criticism for leaving his army did not come just from his officers but from Essex's political enemies in Parliament, and the armies and indeed from the public too. Without a vindication of his actions one can never know what prompted this decision. Throughout the war other generals had deserted their stricken commands, leaving their infantry to be destroyed; Waller at Roundway Down, Rupert at Marston Moor, even the king at Naseby. For a man of Essex's honour and pride the decision would have been a heartbreaking one yet he did not want his beloved infantry sacrificed in an obviously doomed last stand, hence his final advice to Skippon. Essex also probably thought that in such a hopeless situation, there was no sense in himself and the army's senior officers being captured as well. Until this debacle Essex had been a successful general and he was Parliament's leading military man who could ill be spared in the context of the war. On the political side, if Essex went into captivity it would seriously limit Parliament's ability to continue the armed struggle and hand an enormous propaganda victory to the king.

The day being quiet, both sides rested and Lieutenant Colonel Boteler was sent to set up the negotiations. The mission was a success and a truce was declared with articles of surrender for Skippon's forces agreed by Prince

Maurice representing his uncle, and Forth, lord general of the royal army. They stated:

> Articles of Agreement made the First of Septemb. 1644 between his Highness Prince Maurice and his Excellency the Earl of Brainford and Forth, Generals of his Majesty's Armies, on the one Part: And Philip Skippon, Sergeant Major General of the Army and Christopher Whichcote, Sergeant Major General of the London Brigade, and the rest of the Officers of the Army, under the Command of the Earl of Essex, now quartered on the West side of the River Foy on the other part.
>
> First, It is a greed that all the Officers and Soldiers, as well of Horse as Foot, under the Command of the Earl of Essex, being at that time of the Conclusion of this Treaty on the West side of the River Foy, shall to-morrow being the second of September, by eleven of the Clock in the Morning, deliver up near the old Castle on their own Quarters, all their Cannons and Train of Artillery, with all Carriages, Necessaries and Materials thereunto belonging; and likewise all the Arms offensive, both of Horse and Foot, and all Powder, Bullet, Match and Ammunition whatsoever, unto such officers and the General of His Majesty's Artillery shall appoint to receive the same: Except only the Swords and Pistols of all Officers above the degree of Corporals, who are by this agreement to wear and carry the same away.
>
> Secondly, It is agreed that immediately after the Delivery up of the said Artillery, Arms and Ammunition, &c. that all Officers and Soldiers, both of Horse and Foot, of the said Army, shall march out of their Quarters to Lestithiel, with their Colours both of Horse and Foot, Trumpets and Drums; and that all Officers of Foot above the degree of Serjeants shall take with them such Horses and Servants as properly belong unto themselves, as also all reform'd Officers, their Horses and Arms, (not exceeding the Number of Fifty) and likewise to take with them all the Bag and Baggage and Waggons, with their Teams of Horses properly belonging to the said Officers.
>
> Thirdly, It is agreed that they shall have safe Convoy of one hundred Horse from their Quarters to Lestithiel, and thence in their march the nearest convenient way to Pool and Wareham: Provided that they secure the said Convoy's return to Bridgwater or his Majesty's Army, and that in their march they touch not at any Garison.
>
> Fourthly, It is agreed that in case they shall march from Pool to any other Place by Land, that neither they or any of them shall bear Arms (more than is allowed in the Agreement) nor do any Hostile Act until the come to Southampton or Portsmouth.
>
> Fifthly, It is agreed that all the sick and wounded Officers and Soldiers of that Army who are not able to march, shall be left at Foy, and there secured from any Violence to their Persons or Goods and Care taken of them, until such time as they can be conveniently transported to Plymouth.
>
> Sixthly, It is agreed that all the Officer and Soldiers of that Army, for the better conveniency of their march, shall be permitted to receive all such Monies, Provisions of Victuals, and other Accommodations, as they shall be able to procure from Plymouth; to which end they shall have a Pass granted for any Persons, not exceeding the number of twelve, whom they shall send for the same.

Seventhly, It is agreed that there be no inviting of any Soldiers, but that such will voluntarily come to his Majesty's Service, shall not be hindered.

Lastly, The Subscribers on both sides do agree and engage their Faith and Honour, that all the above-written Articles shall be kept inviolate.

Maurice.
Brainford.
Ph. Skippon.
Christopher Whichcote.[33]

Essex's great gamble of the West Country Campaign was over. The surrender was the only way of preventing the foregone conclusion of a complete collapse of Essex's Foot, and possible great loss of life. Even so many old soldiers found the surrender dishonourable and broke their own weapons rather than leaving them to the Royalists. This was the spirit that was to carry survivors through the next couple of horrendous weeks.

Essex's Army During the Lostwithiel Campaign

Horse
The Lord General's Life Guard of Horse[34]
The Lord General's Regiment of Horse
Lieutenant General William Balfour's Lifeguard of Horse
Lieutenant General Sir William Balfour's Regiment of Horse
Commissary General Hans Behre's Regiment of Horse
Quarter Master General John Dalbier's Regiment of Horse
Colonel Edmund Harvey's London Regiment of Horse
Colonel Sir Robert Pye's Regiment of Horse
Colonel James Sheffield's Regiment of Horse
Colonel Leighton's Plymouth Regiment of Horse

Foot
The Lord General's Regiment of Foot
John, Lord Robartes' Regiments of Foot
Sergeant Major General Philip Skippon's Regiment of Foot
Colonel Henry Barclay's Regiment of Foot
Colonel Adam Cunningham's Regiment of Foot, under Richard Fortescue
Colonel Thomas Tyrrel's Regiment of Foot
Colonel William Davis's Regiment of Foot
Colonel Edward Aldrich's Regiment of Foot
Colonel James Carr's Regiment of Foot (Plymouth Garrison)
Colonel Anthony Rouse's Regiment of Foot (Plymouth Garrison)[35]
Colonel John Weare's Regiment of Foot (Devon)
The Green Auxiliary Regiment of the London Trained Bands

33 Rushworth, John, *A Continuation of Historical Collections* Vol. II, pp.705-706.
34 Subsumed as the first troop of the Lord General's Regiment of Horse.
35 As Rouse' Regiment fails to be mentioned in any account it is likely that during the campaign they were subsumed by Carr's.

Commanding Officer Major General Christopher Whichcote
The Orange Auxiliary Regiment of the London Trained
Commanding Officer Colonel Gower
The Yellow Auxiliary Regiment of the London Trained Bands
Commanding Officer Colonel Robert Tichborne

Dragoons
Captain Abercrommy's Company

Artillery
Captain William's Firelocks
General of the Ordnance Richard Deane
Wagon Master General Richardson

10

The Second Newbury Campaign, Autumn 1644

The events of September 1644 at Lostwithiel obliged Essex's army to surrender, but rather than imprison and feed the men, the royalists allowed the army to go free. At 10 o'clock in the morning on Monday 2 September in pouring rain, Skippon led Essex's dispirited Foot out of Fowey and Castle Dore through the jeering ranks of the royalist army. In accordance with the terms of capitulation the Foot relinquished its guns, muskets, pikes and equipment and went ' … presst all of heap like sheep, though not so innocent. So durty and so dejected as were rare to see'.[1] As they shuffled through Lostwithiel, the local population turned upon them, many taking up cudgels to attack them, rob them and vent their anger at having been subjected to their deprivations and the royalist bombardment, the blame for which they laid at their door. Some of the parliamentarian officers were targets for these revenge attacks and a few individuals suffered badly, and Skippon himself was robbed. The unarmed men walked behind their rolled company colours carried by mounted officers and, where they could, some had picked up staves of wood to carry for protection. These were indeed needed, as it seems that the 100 strong royalist cavalry escort under Lieutenant Colonel Scroop, assigned both to protect and convey Skippon's men out of the West, was unable to prevent these attacks. Then, contrary to the rules of war and the surrender terms, many of the men were attacked and plundered of personal possessions by royalist soldiers. They lost what remaining food they had, a lot of their clothes, shoes and almost everything else of value or of use, and some were even killed. In a sorry state and without weapons to defend themselves or supplies to sustain them, they were obliged to march eastwards, keeping together as best they could to deter potential attacks by locals.

Although the Horse suffered deprivation during their retreat, this return of the Foot to central southern England has been called a 'death march'. There are reports of many having bound their feet with rags to prevent their feet being cut to ribbons. With many of its leaders dead or gone, and now half-starved and demoralised, Essex's army had been knocked out of the war and

1 Richard Symonds, Long C.E., (ed.) *Diary of the Marches of the Royal Army During the Great Civil War* (London, 1859), p.67.

virtually all the West Country was back under royalist control. In addition to these setbacks, Parliament's other army in the south, Sir William Waller's Army of the Southern Association, had not fully recovered from the disaster at Cropredy. Even the victory at Cheriton and the deliberate detaching of Middleton's cavalry had taken its toll. Overall, it was in a poor state and needed time to rebuild. It is unlikely that Waller could have gone to Essex's aid at Lostwithiel even if he had had the will to do so. The Calendar of State Papers Domestic shows many of Waller's Foot regiments being transferred to garrisons in the south whilst his Horse was dispersed to premature winter quarters. With both Essex's and Waller's armies severely cut up and in need of rest and recuperation, the situation did not look good for Parliament.

Seeking to take advantage of this situation, the royalist Council of War planned to advance out of the West and strike into East Anglia to set up winter quarters. It would be a deliberate move into a major supply and recruiting ground for Parliament and pose a threat to the army of the Eastern Association and indeed to London. Before that however, they envisaged mopping up what was left of parliamentarian resistance in southern England by concentrating upon the region south of the royal capital of Oxford. The objectives behind this strategic aim entailed first a march in strength through the southwest, to impress their supremacy upon the population, and then to raise the on-going sieges of Basing House near Basingstoke, of Donnington Castle near Newbury, and of Banbury and its castle. Whilst the king's army had been in the west these garrisons had been temporarily isolated and left to fend for themselves. Now succour was on the way as the royal army began its steady if slow march eastward from Exeter.

However, Essex was not beaten yet. Upon his arrival at Plymouth, the first thing he did was to write to Skippon explaining his actions and concluded thus,

> Sir, if you live I shall take as great care of you as of my Father if alive; if God otherwise disposes of you, as long as I have drop of blood I shall strive to revenge yours on the causers of it. The horse are come safe; nothing but fear of slavery and to be triumphed on, should have made us have gone. Sir, I am yours till death,
>
> Plymouth 2nd Sept., 1644
>
> Essex
>
> PS upon Notice from you that you subsist, and how long you can, no hazard shall be let slip.[2]

The next day, by which time details of the surrender were known to him, Essex sent a full relation of his defeat to Sir Philip Stapleton in London who read it out in Parliament, bypassing the Committee of Both Kingdoms whom the earl blamed for lack of support. In it he acknowledged,

> It is the greatest blow that ever befell our Party: I desire nothing more than to come to the Tryal: Such losses as these must not be smothered up. [3]

2 John Rushworth, *Historical Collection, 1618-1649,* (London, 1691), p. 704.
3 *Ibid,* p. 703.

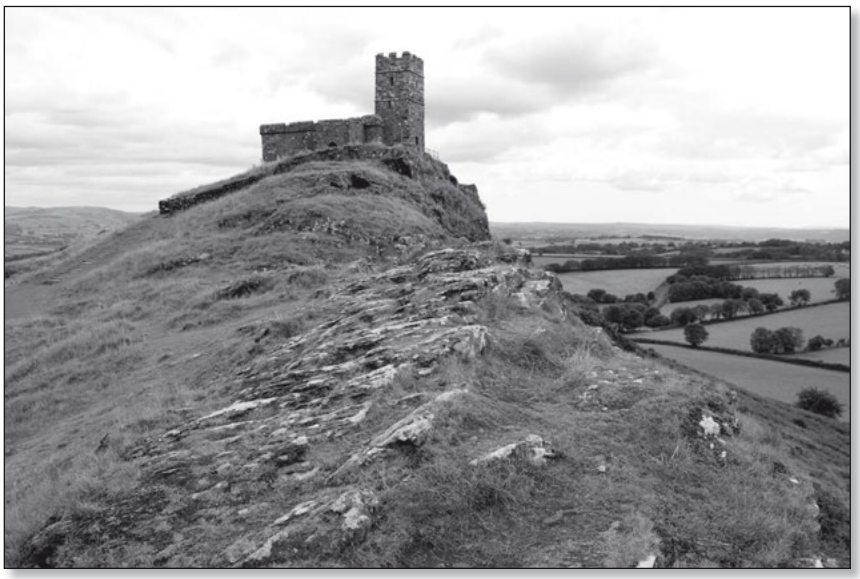
But he also showed a courageous heart, a determined resolution and sound practical, military application. Plymouth saw the start of the process of rebuilding.

> I shall take the best care for the present for the security of this town; I intend to lend them money, and if the Parliament will provide arms for the relief, and ships to transport them to Portsmouth, and for a thousand men to be ready against our men come thither, (for till then they can do no hostile act) I intend to stay at Portsmouth until I know the Parliament's pleasure, whether I shall presently come up to give it an account, or tarry there till the Foot come up. This is a business shall not sleep, if it be in the power of
> Your humble faithful servant
> Essex.[4]

He was also aware of the wider picture and the need for a feasible future plan. Ever the sound organiser, he sent detailed propositions for the re-equipping of his army, including:

> For the Horse
> First that five hundred horse may be speedily provided and sent down for ye recruiting of His Excellency's Cavalry there being so many troopers on foote having lost their horses, some killed in the ye service. Some dead, and others absolutely lamed with the extremity of duty. And 500 payre of pistols allready ordered may be sent speedily likewise sent down with 500 potts and corsletts. That one months pay for ye Horse may be speedily sent down, their very clothes being worn and rotten upon their backs, with constant service abroad night and day for 6 weeks together in very wet weather.
>
> That the Chirurgians Chests may be new provided according to former allowance.
>
> That newe skarffs may be allowed to ye troopers in regard to ye great inconvenience we find it upon service we cannot know one another from the enemy.
>
> For ye Foot
>
> That six thousand complete suites, vizt Coates, Britches, Shirts, stockings & shoes, six thousand Musketts, 6000 swords, 1000 pikes, 80 Partizans, 180 Halberts and 180 Drums may be speedily sent away.
>
> That the sum of £15 may be payed immediately to each Chirurgian for ye renewing of his chest.
>
> That one months pay for ye Army be speedily sent down.
>
> For ye Trayne
> Twenty pieces of ordinance, viz four Demi-Culverings, Sixteen small sakers, where of six to be of 12lb weight and ten of 6lb weight if they may be had or otherwise small Mynions of 5 or 6 lb wt, or some of these and some of the other ye rest Drakes, as they may be had … [5]

4 *Ibid.*
5 Bodleian Library. Tanner Manuscripts, volume 61, folio 149.



Brent Tor. (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

Nobody could accuse Essex of not understanding what was needed or of not being thorough.

Having despatched his requirements for the army and also done what he could for Plymouth, Essex took ship for Portsmouth leaving behind Lord Robartes to whom, on 11 September, he sent his commission to be the new governor. So as to strengthen Robartes' command, Essex ordered the London Yellow Auxiliaries, who were still in Dorset, to march to take ship for Plymouth.

Whilst the earl was making his plans to rebuild it, his cavalry, and the defeated and disarmed infantry were marching back out of the West. Each had its own story.

With Scroop's men shadowing them, the dejected Foot marched late into the evening to escape from enemy Cornwall, reaching the bare fields around Brent Tor, just inside the Devon border, where they snatched a few hours rest in what was left of a bitter rainy night.

Next morning they marched on towards Okehampton where they hoped to find food and shelter but, when they were within a mile of the town, they received instructions that they must advance no further, as Lord Goring's troops were already quartered there. Once more they were forced to lie in the fields all night without shelter or provisions. One survivor stated 'that night a penny loaf would have sold for half-a-crown and many thanks'.[6]

By Thursday they were marching on the London road and stopped for the night in the area around Cheriton Bishop where, for the first time, they managed to get some accommodation and provisions. The next day they planned to halt at Tiverton but again royalist troops prevented them and again that night they 'lay in the hungry fields'.[7] Despite the temptation to disburse to seek food, or to fall out from sheer exhaustion, Skippon managed to keep his men together and moving; he was proving a veritable tower of strength. One officer noted 'in all this trouble I observed Major General Skippon in his carriage; but never did I see any man so patient, so humble, and so truly wise and valiant in all his actions as he'.[8]

6 *A True Relation of the Sad Passages Between the Two Armies in the West* etc. London, Oct 2 1643.
7 *Ibid.*
8 *Ibid.*

On 12 September at Beare, Scroop's royalist Horse that had been herding them officially withdrew with a safe conduct to return to their own army, signed by Skippon. The following night, 13 September, Skippon wrote to Essex that the Foot had reached the safety of the Southampton area. Essex sent this news to the Committee of Both Kingdoms describing his men as 'our poor naked foot' and continued,

> I cannot as yet give your Lordship an account of their number, only Col Butler who commands my regiment, thinks that between 800 and 900 men; but I intend speedily to have a general muster both of horse and foot.[9]

To continue the story of the Horse who were not party to the surrender and were thus still a legitimate fighting force; they spent less than a day in the Plymouth area before recommencing their retreat eastwards. However, they did so without Balfour who had fallen ill or had been injured in some way during the night march and had withdrawn from the field.[10] They divided into two parties. The majority, now under Commissary General Behre, began their own gruelling march in appalling weather conditions across the centre of Dartmoor, reaching Crediton at about noon on 3 September. A smaller body of horse, perhaps 500 or so, including Essex's Life Guard, took an easier but much longer route by riding along the western edge of Dartmoor and then north eastwards.

On 4 September, as they were crossing Hatherleigh Moor, this smaller group was attacked and pursued by royalist Horse under Sir Francis Donnington. The running action lasted until they reached the church at Little Torrington where they made a successful stand and Donnington was beaten off. On 6 September, the fugitives reached the safety of Barnstaple only to find that they had just missed the relief force under Middleton which, although being sent to their aid, had pulled back towards the east the day before.

Meanwhile Behre's larger group had left Crediton and marched to Tiverton where Sir John Berkley and part of the royalist garrison of Exeter fell upon their rear and 'forced them thence disorderly' in the direction of Taunton.[11] However the proximity of Middleton's brigade, was enough of a threat to put paid to any further pursuit. The animosity existing between Behre and Middleton was sufficient to prevent their two forces joining, and they stayed at least ten miles apart. On hearing of this, Parliament sent various dispatches stating that they desired the two officers to 'upon contemplation of the common interest, every man will lay aside all particular claims and join heartily in all counsels and endeavours for the public service'.[12]

Parliament also wrote to Essex to send back Balfour to his command to which the General replied on 13 September that he would 'have been

9 *C.S.P.D.*, 1644, p. 502.

10 It would appear that he managed to leave the army and retire to safety, where he went is unknown.

11 Sir Edward Walker.*Historical Discourses.*

12 *C.S.P.D., 1644,* p. 491.

extremely willing to have complied with your desires if Sir William Balfour's health would have permitted it'.

He also added that Behre had pressed him

> … with a great deal of earnestness that he may return to his own country, or at least to have a pass for three months as soon as he has brought the horse to safety. For present I hope there can be no dispute amongst them, for Col Dalbier writes me word that my horse are so tired out that they must have seven or eight days rest.[13]

The next day Essex wrote

> Our horse did extremely gallantly in their retreat, though I hear they lost 200 horses, not by the enemy, but being over tired by their long march and want of shoeing … If these forces may have speedy relief of what is intended for them, I doubt not they will give a very good account of their actions; expedition is much in this, because winter comes on so fast.[14]

Not withstanding Essex's assurances and the departure of Behre for the continent, the Horse, now under Dalbier, continued their withdrawal, marching towards Salisbury despite the pleas of the Committee of Both Kingdoms that they should join with Waller's forces, to hinder the king's march eastwards.[15]

Having defeated Essex at Lostwithiel and secured Cornwall and Devon, the royal army began its return to central southern England and the relief of Basing, Donnington and Banbury. As it marched through Somerset, Charles was joined at South Perrot on 30 September by Prince Rupert with a considerable force of Horse. Rupert came before his uncle to report the detail of his defeat at Marston Moor and to endeavour to devolve much of the blame. However, as the result of this battle meant Parliament was now strong in the north it became even more imperative for the king to win the south. Royal plans appear to have been revised so as to strike at Waller's scattered parliamentarian forces whilst it was recuperating, and any of those belonging to Essex who might still be straggling. In this way it was hoped to crush all potential pockets of parliamentarian forces, alongside ensuring the relief of the three sieges. Rupert was not asked to join the main army but was sent with his cavalry to take control of Bristol, to both strengthen the garrison and in the hope that his presence there would attract part of Waller's depleted army to watch him and thus weaken Parliament's remaining force still further. Meanwhile, the king's army made for Blandford and then Salisbury, entering the city on or around 15 October.

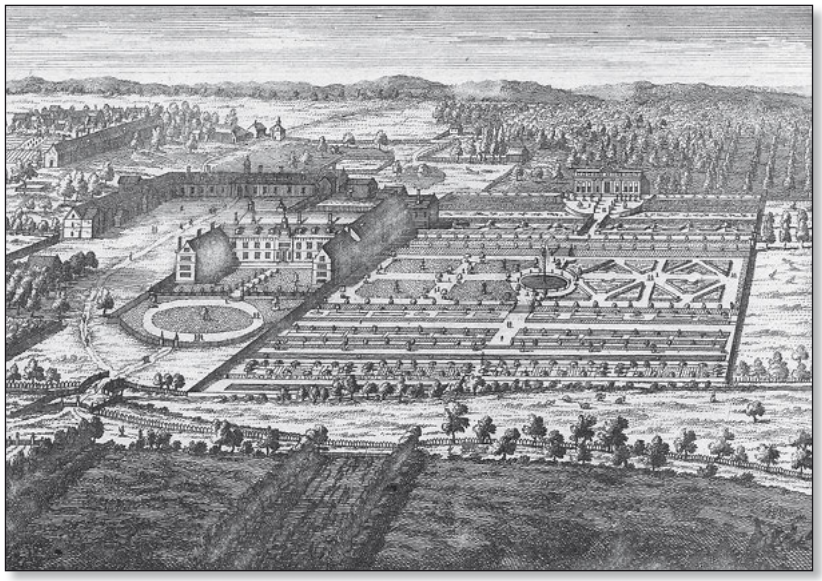
Fortunately for Essex, Waller's men were not totally broken and dispirited by their recent defeats and whilst his Foot was in no condition to fight and needing more time to recover, some of his cavalry had been rallied and put

13 *Ibid*, p. 497- 498.

14 *Ibid*, p. 502-503.

15 Waller's army was still in some disarray after its defeat at Cropredy Bridge in June 1644. Consequently Parliament felt any additional force sent to Waller would be very useful. One can imagine what Essex thought of the idea.

in some sort of order. They had not only managed to find supplies including remounts but also to rebuild a portion of their numbers through recruiting. Overall Waller seems to have been able to field a substantial number of Horse, including Middleton's Brigade which he had returned from their excursion into the West and covering the final stages of Skippon's retreat to Southampton and Portsmouth.



Southwick Park, rendezvous for Essex's Army, an 18th century engraving. (Turton Collection)

For a few days in mid September Skippon led in the pitiful remains of Essex's once proud army. On 15 September, what was left of the City regiments of Colonel Whichcote's Green and Colonel Gower's Orange Regiments of the City of London Auxiliaries arrived, were paid off, and promptly sent home to London. Weare's[16] Regiment, now under Lieutenant Colonel Cory, was mustered into its 12 companies and found to consist of only 150 men, plus officers. Of these, 36 men were taken into Essex's own company, the rest presumably were returned home.

As more and more units and parts of units limped into Portsmouth, it was apparent that this number of unarmed men, many sick, could not be safely billeted in the town especially as Essex reported that the port was 'very ill provided of all things', and that there was 'no magazine of corn, the works go to decay, and few carriages able to endure a shot'.[17] The lord general therefore had many of his men ferried over to the Isle of Wight to recuperate and await in safety the arrival of their new clothes and equipment. This was also a way of keeping his men together to await their pay for as he said of his officers, that so many were 'so plundered that without money, to afford them necessary accommodation, I shall hardly be able to make them take the field again'.[18] Having suffered in the past from high rates of desertion by wisely putting his men on an island Essex was not only ensuring their safety but preventing mass desertions.

Essex took over Southwick Park, the house of the parliamentarian cavalry officer Colonel Richard Norton, a large country estate north of Portsmouth. He made it his new army headquarters where he would concentrate his resources for rebuilding his army.

On 21 September, the Committee of Both Kingdoms wrote to Essex to inform him 'there were sent down from hence 2,000 clothes, and 3,000 arms for your army which will be conveyed from Godalming to Chichester by 40

16 This colonel's name is sometimes spelt Ware.
17 *C.S.P.D., 1644,* p. 518.
18 *Ibid*, p. 498.

dragoons and from there to Portsmouth'.[19] Essex's Wagon Master General Richardson, who was in charge of the shipment, records in his accounts how 32 wagons were assembled in the New Artillery Grounds in London on 'Thursday 19th September being the first day the clothes and arms began to come in from Mr Harris and the gunsmiths'.[20] The convoy had not reached the lord general by 24 September, and he wrote despairingly to the committee 'I hear nothing as yet of the coming of arms and clothes for want of which I fear many of our men will abscond'.[21] Eventually the wagons began to arrive, followed by two further convoys of 10 and 20 wagons respectively. Upon their arrival in Portsmouth, they were off- loaded and their cargoes distributed among the men, some of whom had been ferried back from the Isle of Wight. Wounded and sick soldiers were put aboard the empty vehicles for the return journey to hospitals in London. Some of the first units re-equipped must have been the Foot of the Plymouth garrison who were quickly returned by sea to Devon. The Plymouth regiments included Colonel Carre's Foot and Colonel Layton's Horse, of which Lord Robartes wrote disconsolately on 4 October, 'the Plymouth foot which went from hence, 1,000, there come with Lieutenant Colonel Martin, only 200'. [22]

However, more troops were still arriving at Portsmouth, for on 2 October the detachment of Essex's troops left at Barnstaple marched in consisting of three companies of Foot, Essex's Life Guard and elements of Balfour's Horse. The Barnstaple Garrison had surrendered on terms, 'indifferently kept', to Goring's forces, on 17 September and had been allowed to march out and keep their arms.[23] Even the 16 dragoons captured at Saltash had been released and also rejoined the ranks, but due to deaths and desertions many other soldiers were never to return. By the time Parliament sent down commissioners to Portsmouth to find out when Essex would be ready to march, he had probably 3,000 fit infantry under his command. Most of them had been re-equipped, but he complained,

> … we have as yet neither drums, partisans, nor halberds. It will not only be difficult to call the soldiers together without drums, but the enemy, now that we march from them without sound of drums, will say we run away, they being more valiant in voice than in action. If our speed in marching does not answer our expectations, the commissioners here can best account for the reason of the delay.[24]

No matter the extraordinary feats accomplished by Essex and his quartermasters, his army had lost substantial numbers of men since their days in Cornwall. Some were casualties from action, some victims of the horrible conditions endured during their retreat, and many had given up, quit the army and returned to their homes and families.

To meet the need for men in the south Parliament ordered Edward Montagu, Earl of Manchester and his Army of the Eastern Association, which

19 *Ibid.*
20 NA. SP.28/140.
21 *C.S.P.D., 1644.*
22 Many may have slipped away during the retreat and returned home of their own accord.
23 British Library. Perfect Occurrences etc No 7.
24 *C.S.P.D., 1644*, p. 26

Earl of Manchester, engraving after Hollar. (Turton Collection)

had been part of the victorious forces on Marston Moor, to join with the two southern generals, Essex and Waller, and form a tripartite command of a major Army of Southern England. It was a sound military plan but there were already significant tensions between the three parliamentarian commanders. Essex had prevaricated over giving Waller a commission as a field general as he saw him as a publicity-grabbing opportunist. Waller had little time for Manchester whom both he and Essex saw as an over-privileged interferer who used influence to unfairly acquire supplies and favours. Manchester disliked both Waller and Essex and took every opportunity to throw what he saw as his victory at Marston Moor in their faces. Waller blamed Essex for his defeat at Roundway Down, accusing him of deliberately permitting Wilmot to leave Oxford, and Essex blamed Waller for his defeat at Lostwithiel accusing him of attacking the king's army in a vain-glorious attempt to enhance his reputation. Essex also saw Manchester as a rival for supreme command and was suspicious of him. Added to all this, Manchester had fallen out with his lieutenant general of Horse, the up-and-coming Oliver Cromwell who had risen from the rank of captain in Essex's Regiment of Horse and whom Manchester deeply distrusted. Despite their differences and personal antagonism the three generals eventually met, although Manchester was resistant to committing his entire army to any proposed project. He had not wanted to join with Essex and Waller but his request to his political masters to allow him to remain in the area of St Albans, was denied.

An uneasy Council of War responded surprisingly quickly to the situation of a growing royalist threat and Parliament processed coordinated orders. However, whilst Essex continued his build up in Portsmouth, Waller gathered his scattered cavalry around Sherborne, and then once the king's army arrived in the area, they fell back to Andover. Meanwhile Manchester rallied his regiments at Reading, where he took receipt of Essex's new train of artillery, and then interpreted his orders to march into the West as instructions to join Adjutant General Horton's siege of Donnington Castle near Newbury.

The royalists advanced on Waller's cavalry at Andover on 18 October, and as he was heavily outnumbered, and had no Foot to hold ground, Waller was forced to abandon the town and make a fighting withdrawal back to Basingstoke. Meanwhile a little further north at Newbury, a royalist advance party of Horse appeared before Donnington Castle where, although Manchester's men had joined Horton's siege, he had been unwilling to attempt a storm. Of his nine regiments of Foot he had eight at Donnington which supposes one had yet to join the field army and was probably still in Reading; it is likely it came up with the London Brigade which had also been ordered to support Essex. Rather than face a full advancing royal army, Manchester and Horton lifted the siege of Donnington, and on 17 October, Manchester's advance guard also entered Basingstoke. The first royalist garrison had been relieved, so the king's army secured Newbury and then began its march towards its second objective, Basing House. They set off down the Basingstoke road, taking a southeast route across Greenham Common.

Despite feeling increasingly ill Essex worked on. The pressure, endless administration work and a heavy cold which would not clear were taking their toll. Essex took command of the whole theatre on behalf of Parliament and had called for a General Rendezvous of the Three Armies at Basingstoke on 20 October. He had written to the Committee of Both Kingdoms on 13 October that 'I intend to march out on Wednesday the 16th, knowing it to be of the utmost importance to make head against the King's sudden advancing.'[25]

On 15 October, boats were sent to collect those of his men still on the Isle of Wight, a task made difficult because of bad weather. The following day all the disparate elements of Essex's Foot were brought together at Southwick Park, from whence the 3,000 or so men, set out on their first day's march, stopping that night at Petersfield.[26] Both groups of Essex's cavalry had also rejoined the slowly rebuilding army and were back under the command of Sir William Balfour who had recovered from his illness. The lord general now had an army to block any attempt the king might make on London or indeed to stop his return to Oxford; if he could unite his own with Manchester's and Waller's armies, their force would become truly formidable.

Dressed in their new clothes and carrying their new weapons, they marched north towards Basingstoke. According to commissioners Pyndar and Herbert, 'the weather grew stormy and for three days and nights rain fell incessantly, our foot marched with extraordinary diligence and cheerfulness through deep ways' adding that they 'hoped to fight their Cornish enemies whose barbarianism will never be pardoned'.[27] Their second night was at Alresford, the third at Alton, finally arriving at Basingstoke on 20 October. One of the royalist defenders of Basing House noted the arrival 'at noon some regiments of Horse and Foot belonging to the Earl of Essex join in the leaguer, their Army towards evening drawn in battalia that night keep the field'.[28]

Essex's timely arrival at Basing calmed the panic following the royalists' taking of Andover, the news of which had almost caused Manchester to quit Basingstoke and retreat to Odiham. Repercussions of this alarm were to appear as part of the heated enquiry into Manchester's conduct, which was held by the Parliamentary Committee in the following November.

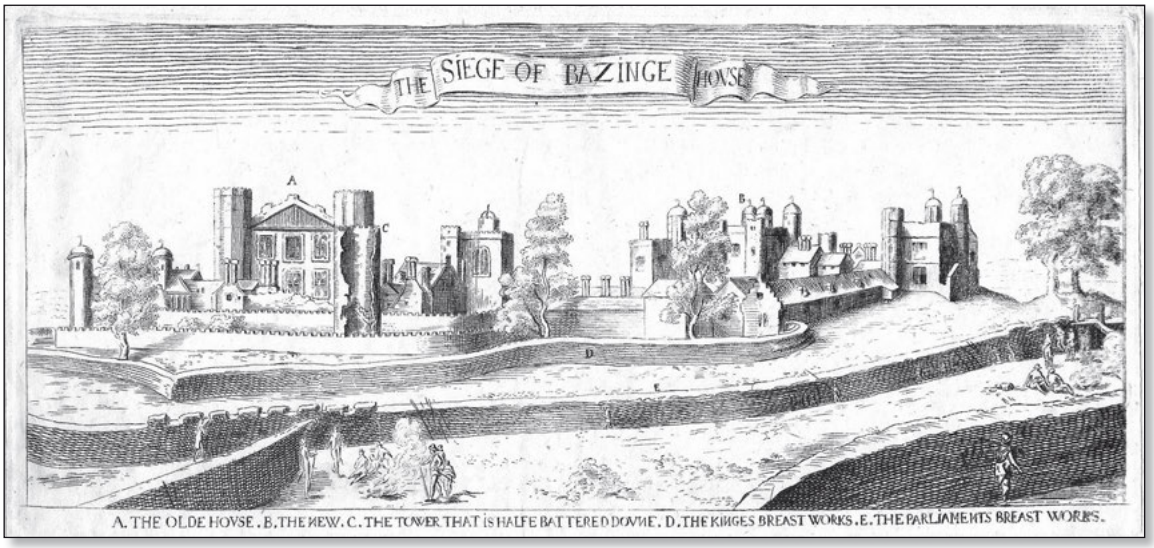
It must be remembered that secrecy was almost impossible in those days due to activities of spies, so the royalists knew of this rendezvous of the three armies and how big it was, even if exact numbers eluded them. Such was the reported size of the amassed parliamentarian soldiery that the king decided to delay his march to Basing and ordered a temporary halt at Kingsclere. Royalist spies reported that not only was the enemy gathering in strength around Basingstoke but also that it was numerically superior in cavalry and that the Basingstoke countryside was rather open. It was felt that this open

25 *Ibid,* p. 36

26 Commons' Journals 3, p. 676. This was not the only time Southwick has had military use. During WWII it was the Allied headquarters for the D Day landings. Regrettably no roll of Essex's army at this muster survives.

27 *Ibid.*

28 A Description of the Siege of Basing Castle Kept by the Lord Marquis of Winchester. Quoted in Adair. J., *They Saw It Happen* (Hampshire County Council, Winchester, 1993).


THE SIEGE OF BAZINGE HOVSE
A. THE OLDE HOVSE . B. THE NEW. C. THE TOWER THAT IS HALFE BATTERED DOWNE. D. THE KINGES BREAST WORKS . E. THE PARLIAMENTS BREAST WORKES.

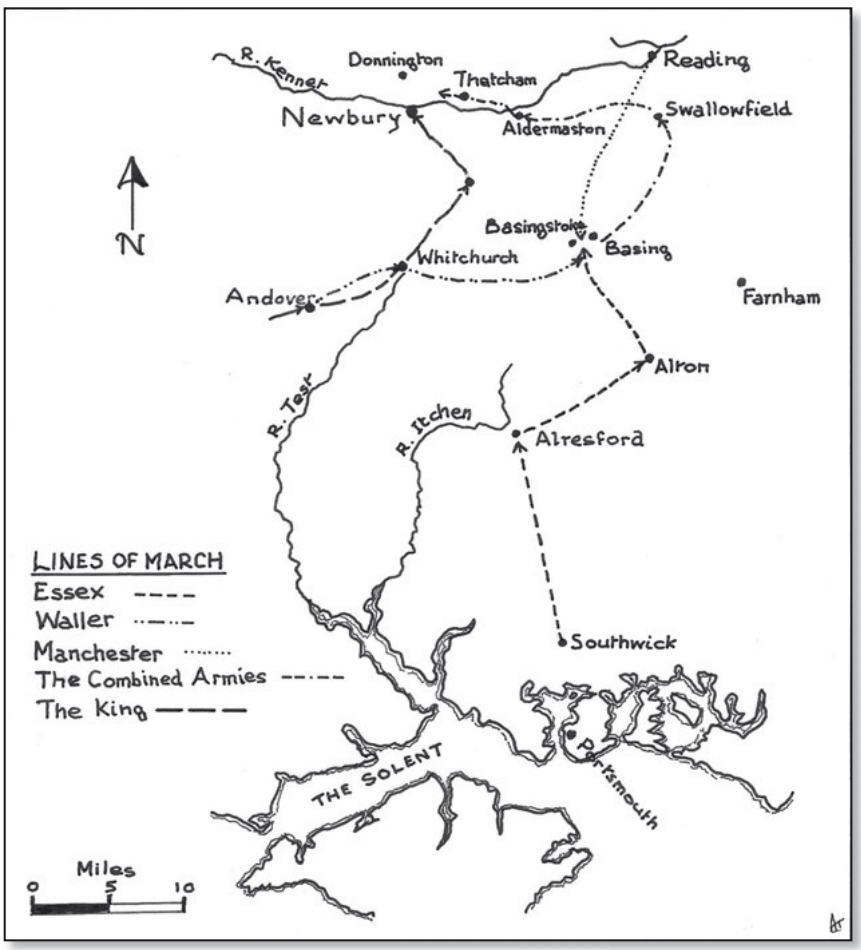
The Siege of Basing House, a contemporary engraving of 1644. (Turton Collection)

ground better suited Parliament's preponderance in Horse; an apprehensive view reinforced by a strong cavalry probe of Kingsclere sent by Essex and led by a Captain Fincher from Waller's army. Fincher's party withdrew, but not before it had spread disquiet. The king took advice and decided not press ahead with his march. The Marquis of Winchester and his garrison at Basing House was abandoned yet again to its fate as the royal army swung north, retiring back to Newbury and the defensive safety of its hedges and enclosures. They retreated and reached Newbury quickly and easily; the army camping for the night on Red Heath, southwest of Wash Common, whilst local legend has it that the king and his staff set up his headquarters in Shaw House, although this cannot be substantiated.

Over the next few days the royal army rested in and around the busy Berkshire town.

The royalists had held Donnington Castle since the first battle of Newbury; Colonel John Boys had caused a large star fort earthwork around the castle to be constructed and the whole edifice proved very effective at controlling the area and subduing the pro-Parliament town. However, a twelve day bombardment from Horton's guns and a further nineteen days from Manchester's had brought down many of the medieval walls and pounded much of the masonry to rubble. Only the gatehouse towers remain today.

As the royalist army had marched north from Kingsclere to Newbury, the parliamentarian Horse had kept in touch with it and regularly skirmished with its rearguard troops. The pressure was on the rear and the eastern flank as Essex sought a way to cut the royal lines of communication by getting troops of Horse between them and their base at Oxford. They continued these flanking and skirmishing manoeuvres and instead of offering an outright battle or attacking the royalists on the march, the parliamentarians worked their way east of Newbury. Essex's intention was to both threaten the king's route to his capital at Oxford and to prevent them getting between him and his own capital of London. It also meant he could protect their depots



Second Newbury Campaign. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

of Reading and Windsor. However, the most crucial advantage to be gained by Essex's choice of route was that the army could cross the Kennet between Thatcham and Theale and thus advance upon Newbury on the north bank of the river, rather than have to cross it under fire. With Manchester's army in the lead, this march of the three armies took them northeast from Basingstoke, up the Reading road before swinging westward. The infantry marched via Swallowfield and cavalry via Aldermaston. Gradually Manchester's men grew closer to Newbury.

The Horse from both royalist and parliamentarian forces patrolled incessantly, and they clashed around Thatcham, as the senior officers of both sides sent out probes to seek intelligence so as to prepare for a major engagement. Waller came up with some of his Horse to join Manchester with the advance guard, but Essex's illness had developed into something more serious and incapacitated him, so he remained in his carriage with the main force. In further clashes the parliamentarians tried to 'beat up' various royalist cavalry quarters. According to *Mercurius Aulicus* one such attack was repulsed by Lieutenant General Bovel (or Bovill) who was serving as the Lieutenant Colonel of Sir Francis Donnington's Regiment.

Around and in Newbury itself the royalists created fortified strong points, dug entrenchments and mounted batteries seeking to create a ring of steel around the town, using houses great and small, marshes and water courses to form obstacles and barriers to thwart any attack. Meanwhile the parliamentarians sought to bring their forces together, calling them in to rally around Thatcham to the east of the town. Some units were marching down from Reading whilst those with Essex marched to meet them, crossing the Kennet at Lodge Farm, a ford near Padworth. Whilst Essex's army and Waller's main force marched as fast as they could to rendezvous at Thatcham, Manchester's van settled down very near to a royal army which was unusually

short of cavalry.[29] Like the first battle of Newbury the two armies had come too close to each other for either to march away with impunity.

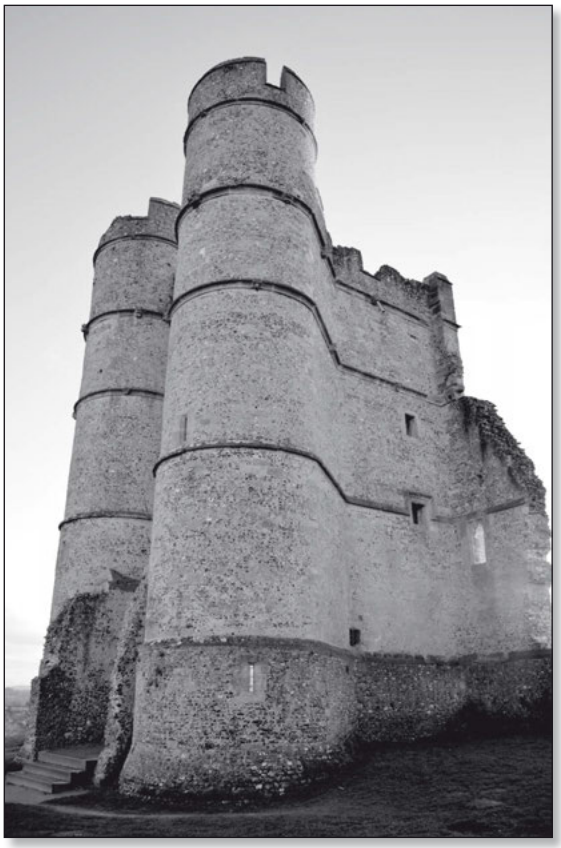
Essex and the main army settled at Bradfield and on Beenham Heath, although the earl himself was now very ill. It is believed that in the past he had suffered from tuberculosis and his recent exhaustion probably lowered his immunity system so that his severe cold appears to have brought on pneumonia with the complication of a reappearance of his TB plus possible pleurisy.[30] Essex remained in his carriage and, prostrate upon a feather mattress, headed for Reading. His campaign was over. Indeed so too was his military career. After his harrowing experience at Lostwithiel and his prodigious efforts at Portsmouth his health had finally collapsed. Essex's absence was concealed from the troops although on Friday 25 October a general rendezvous was staged upon the heath at Bucklebury, when it must have become obvious he was not present. His army had to fight without him and in this narrative we focus upon the role played in the action by Essex's regiments which were all concentrated in the western theatre of the battle and with their own general absent, fought under Waller.

The king entrusted the defence of the western approach to the town to his nephew Prince Maurice who held the village of Speen. This village sat on a narrow plateau of an east-west ridge, along which ran a road from Newbury to Hungerford. The gradients either side of this plateau were quite marked, but the southern slope is considerably steeper. Although passable to both Foot and Horse, any advance up either slope, from the north or south, would be hard going. The only approach was therefore from the west. At the time of the battle this road to Hungerford was beginning to assume greater importance that the usual road to the West which was on the south side of the Kennet and ran through Kintbury to Hungerford. As well as holding Speen village on high ground, Maurice's left flank rested on the River Kennet and his right on the River Lambourne.

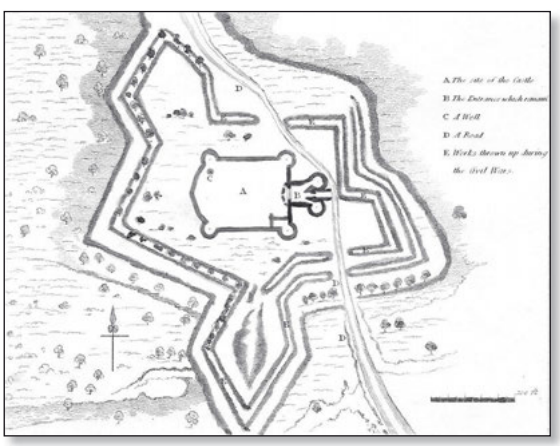
The Kennet was quite deep, and fast flowing and a lot wider than it is today in its managed and canalised state, and whilst the Lambourne was not a formidable river it was typical of those of the area being some 6 to 12' wide, and about 3 to 6 feet deep. Both rivers had deep mud bottoms and the recent rain fall ment they were quite full. Guns could not traverse either and although other troops could find places to wade across them with difficulty, they provided a significant impediment to movement, broke order and halted charges from both Foot and Horse. Several sources say both the Lambourne and the Kennet were also in flood at the time of the battle which would have meant their flood plains were waterlogged and virtually all troop movement through them very difficult if not impossible. The area between the rivers was, apart from sloping, also full of enclosures, most with thick surrounding hedges which also provided obstacles to attack and gave cover. In the west, on Speen Hill it is presumed a series of trenches had been dug and palisaded, including major traverses and even a large redoubt was

29 Sending Rupert and his cavalry to Bristol and Compton and his to Banbury had seriously depleted the royal Horse.

30 Such a diagnosis can only be speculation but his condition was severe enough to totally debilitate him.



Donnington Castle. (Photography by Nicola Turton)

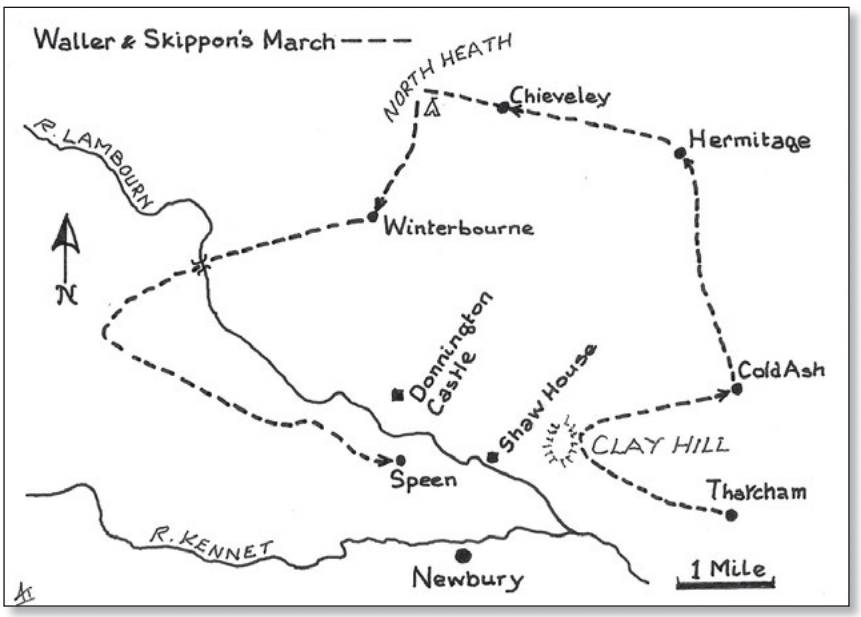


Plan of Donnington Castle's defences, a 19th century engraving. (Turton Collection)

begun at the entrance to Wickham Heath between two hedges. There is a debate concerning the exact nature of this work but it is known to have been a large defensive feature with barricades, deep cross ditches and guns set in embrasures, however any potential archaeological study has been thwarted by the creation of the A34 Newbury Bypass which was cut through its likely position. Maurice had the parliamentarian guns captured from Essex at Lostwithiel put into this redoubt so as to fire upon their former owners should they attack from the west. Moreover, the ground between the rivers was also covered by the guns of Donnington Castle. Although only four in number they could be of considerable nuisance, especially playing upon the left flank of any advancing troops. Maurice had a strong defensive position and its fortified work, or indeed works, made it ominously difficult.

From the parliamentarian point of view they had, with the aid of Essex's drive, gained the strategic advantage and the prospect of battle with odds of virtually 2:1 in their favour. A major victory at Newbury could destroy the king's army and bring the war to a rapid close. They had to attack, so needed a strategy that would not only divide the royalists' fire power but also stretch their defensive capability. The plan was to divide their forces with Manchester with his 3,000 Foot, supported by 1,500 Horse, including a portion of his Eastern Association Horse and Waller's, keeping the royalists facing Clay Hill to the east and north-east busy. Meanwhile Waller would, with all of Essex's army, as well as Harrington's London Brigade plus Cromwell with the other part of the Eastern Association Horse, undertake a long, unseen march, circumnavigating the whole royalist position to the other side of Newbury to attack Maurice in Speen from the west

Waller's force began its 13 mile march late in the evening of 26 October – one source says about midnight. Moving by the major roads they marched from Thatcham north via Cold Ash to Hermitage. They then turned west to Prior's Court and Chievely and North Heath, where they stopped for a few hours of rest. En route they intercepted several royalist provision wagons which they despoiled, and took about 100 prisoners. There are no records saying which units did this, but as Balfour's cavalry appears to have had the van it was likely to have been one of Essex's regiments. From North Heath the force went south to Winterbourne and then swung

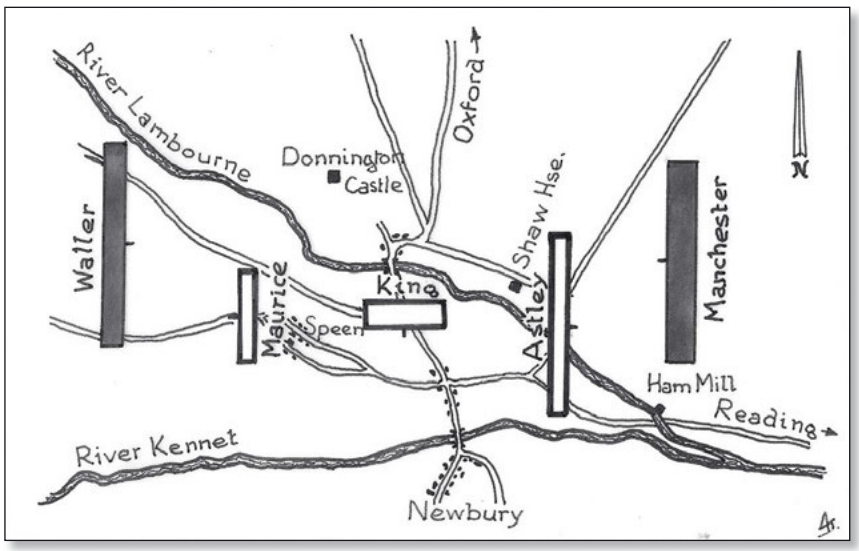


Newbury Flank March. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

southwest for Boxford and its bridge across the Lambourne River. This march subscribed a giant inverted U around the north of Donnington Castle. However, they did not completely avoid the attentions of the garrison, as despite being vastly outnumbered Sir John Boys endeavored to attack the column's rearguard somewhere along the way. They did not cause much damage or slow down the march but they did take 12 men captive.

Secondary accounts say that at daybreak of 27 October, Douglas who commanded a royalist grand guard at Boxford was attacked and quickly dispersed. After crossing the Lambourne, Waller occupied a spine of high ground that ran parallel to the river and divided his column. Essex's Foot and the London Brigade, both under Skippon, as well as Essex's Horse under Balfour, took the high road which ran across Wickham Heath and through Stockcross (today the B4000) although some Horse, possibly Balfour's, might have continued south and then swung east onto the Newbury to Hungerford road (now the A4). Meanwhile, Cromwell and his Eastern Association Horse worked their way along the valley bottom, through Huntspeen and Woodspeen. The three elements of the force converged at the eastern end of Wickham Heath, just west of Speen, but their progress had been slow. The men were tired after marching virtually all night and it was not until 1.00pm in the afternoon that the guns came up and not until 3.00 pm that they had all got into position and deployed ready to attack. Cromwell, on the left, deployed down the slope towards the Lambourne and Essex's Foot were on Speenlawn, today just west of the A4/A34 roundabout. However, they first had to clear some royalist commanded muskets who had occupied a wooded area, called Deans Wood, although the men allocated to the task would have been some of Essex's Foot, we have no account indicating who undertook it.

With Cromwell formed on the low ground to the left, Waller adopted a traditional formation on top of the hill. Sir William Balfour and Essex's Horse formed on the right, whilst Skippon with Essex's and the London Foot were in three great bodies in the centre and supported by some light guns. Several of these guns fired in an agreed signal to alert Manchester that they were ready and to tell him to launch his major attack, but they heard nothing in reply.



The Second Battle of Newbury. (Map drawn by Alan Turton)

In October darkness fell early, so time was short. If the combined assault on the royalists' position was to be effective then Waller could not wait, especially as Colonel John Boys (in Donnington) had seen them and directed his guns their way to add to those Maurice had trained upon them. The fire from the castle could not have been as dangerous as some writers suggest: as already stated Boys only had four guns, but when added to those in the works, one can appreciate why Waller later wrote, 'Their cannon made our ground very hot … there was no way left but to fall on with Horse and Foot, and that without delay … '[31] Despite this comment it would seem that it still took Waller about 30 minutes to put the attack into effect. Why this was we have no way of telling but it must have been galling to Essex's men not only having to serve under an unknown commander but one who kept them standing waiting under fire.[32] Finally orders came to launch the attack.

As stated before, it is not our intention to give detailed accounts of major battles but suffice to say that in the subsequent action Essex's Foot stormed and took Maurice's redoubt with Essex's own regiment being the first into the works. For accounts of the action in much more detail we recommend:

- Barratt, J., *The Second Battle of Newbury* (Stroud, Amberley, 2014).
- Scott, C.L., *The Battles of Newbury* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2008).

However, it should be mentioned that one contemporary account says the attack on the redoubt by Essex's men was driven by sheer fury and hatred of the Cornish who defended it, an anger fed by their ill treatment on the march from Lostwithiel. The royalists fled, leaving the jubilant parliamentarian soldiers to overrun the guns deployed in the battery. Ludlow says that those of Essex's who had been at Lostwithiel recognised some of the pieces and embraced them with tears in their eyes, as if in retaking them they wiped out the shame of their surrender earlier in the year. The victorious soldiers turned these guns around, and fired them into the rear of the retreating royalists.

Having taken the redoubt and the southern heights, some of Barclay's Brigade swung to the left and covered Cromwell's retreat after his Horse had tried to break through a thick hedge and been thrown into confusion by a charge from Goring and Cleveland. Gradually Barclay's Foot supported by

31 Experiences., Quoted in Adair J., *Roundhead General* (Macdonald, London 1969).
32 It might have been that more commanded muskets were proving a nuisance?

the London Brigade got the upper hand in a desperate struggle until the royalists were driven off.

By 3.30pm the whole royalist first line had been driven back to Speen village and Essex's regiments were soon locked in house to house fighting. In about thirty minutes Speen village fell to Skippon. Revenge for Lostwithiel and the treatment handed out to the unarmed and starving survivors took hold and the cry of 'No Quarter!' went up. The retreating Western Foot broke into a rout, shouting, 'Devils! Devils! They fight like Devils!' They fled until they came to a boundary called the Great Hedge between Speen and Speenhamland where the attack appears to have stalled, perhaps due to the royalists being reinforced by part of Blagge's Tertio from the royal central reserve.

However even this position was turned by Balfour and Essex's Horse sweeping around the south of Speen Church then fighting for hedgerow after hedgerow until they broke out into the field beyond that Great Hedge where they were met by Sir Humphrey Bennett's Brigade of Horse and whom they drove from the field. They would have captured the king himself who was on some high ground nearby had not his Lifeguard saved him. Balfour's advance too came to an end thwarted by Foot and more Horse from the royalist reserve. It was a stalemate with sporadic fighting lasting until evening when Waller drew off his exhausted troops. Essex's men occupied the erstwhile royalist quarters at Speen and despite being weary they were in good heart and readied themselves for an assault on that hedge in the morning.

For the men of Essex's army, the second battle of Newbury, like the first, stuttered to an end but, despite their exhaustion, spirits were high and its commanders felt confident of victory the next day – a victory denied them by a surprise withdrawal of the entire royalist force during the night. With Essex their erstwhile general lying ill in Reading his men lay in the fields unaware that they had fought their last battle as the Earl of Essex's Army.

The Earl of Essex's Army at the Second Battle of Newbury

There were other formations under Waller's command in his attack on western Newbury but these were the units from Essex's army.

West Wing: Major General Sir William Waller

Lieutenant General	Sir Arthur Haselrig
Sergeant-Major General of Foot	Philip Skippon
Lieutenant General of the Horse:	Sir William Balfour
Quartermaster General	John Dalbier
Quartermaster General of Foot	Jeremy Baines
Scoutmaster General	James Pitsom

The Right: Lieutenant General of the Horse William Balfour

Lieutenant General William Balfour's Brigade of Horse

1. The Lord General, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex's Lifeguard Troop of Horse
2. The Lord General, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex's Regiment of Horse (Philip Stapleton)
3. Lieutenant General Sir William Balfour's Regiment of Horse (Maj. William Balfour)
4. Quarter Master General John Dalbier's Regiment of Horse
5. Commissary General Hans Behre's Regiment of Horse (Samuel Bosa)
6. Colonel Edmund Harvey's Regiment of Horse
7. Colonel James Sheffield's Regiment of Horse
8. Colonel Sir Robert Pye's Regiment of Horse
9. Lieutenant General Sir Philip Stapleton's Troop of Dragoons

The Centre: Sergeant-Major General of the Foot Philip Skippon

Lieutenant Colonel Butler

1. The Lord General, Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex's Regiment of Foot

Colonel Henry Barclay's Brigade of Foot

1. Sergeant-Major General Philip Skippon's Regiment of Foot (Ashfield)
2. Lord Robartes' Regiment of Foot (William Hunter)
3. Colonel Henry Barclay's Regiment of Foot

Colonel Edward Aldrich's Brigade of Foot

1. Colonel Edward Aldrich's Regiment of Foot (W.Lloyd)
2. Colonel Adam Cunningham's Regiment of Foot (Richard Fortesque)
3. Colonel William Davies' Regiment of Foot
4. Colonel Thomas Tyrell's Regiment of Foot (Richard Ingoldsby)

The London Brigade of Foot

1. The Red Regiment of the London Trained Bands (William Tucker)
2. The Blue Regiment of the London Trained Bands (Francis West)
3. The Yellow Auxiliary Regiment of the Tower Hamlets of the London Trained Bands. (William Willoughby)
4. The Red Auxiliary Regiment of the Liberty of Westminster of the London Trained Bands (Sir James Harrington)

11

Summary and Conclusions

So what was the impact of Essex and his army on the military landscape of the British Civil Wars? It is always difficult to judge a military commander let alone one from another age, particularly if we do not have the comparative military experience ourselves and have seldom had to cope with the responsibility of command, or even the fear or pressure of being in a war zone. Added to which, biographers spend years researching events in which their subjects took part, as well as poring over personal papers and letters in order to gain insights into character and ways of thinking. As much as we might endeavour to understand the factual background by reading and submerging ourselves in accounts, treatises and period texts we have to admit that in the final analysis we can only have a feeling for the zeitgeist of the age and so much eludes us simply because we were never there and so must rely, no matter the primacy of the source, upon second hand witness. We arrive at our interpretation of actions, decisions and events with argued reason and logic based upon as good an understanding as we can manage, but it is only interpretation and it is as secure as the next piece of contradictory evidence to emerge.

We have attempted to give our opinions of the events surrounding the military career of Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex during the 1640s, and although they will not please everyone, we hope they will cast some light on the man and his experiences, and upon the achievements of his army. In this last part of the book we firstly summarise what we have described in the previous chapters then focus on the more general picture of Essex's career as Parliament's commander in chief during the early years of the wars.

Essex was not involved with the opening skirmishes but successfully campaigned to bring about the first major engagement of the civil wars at Edgehill, 23 October 1642. Although the royalist Horse swept the parliamentarian cavalry from the field on both wings, Essex's infantry and his cavalry reserve fought a dogged and determined battle, driving the king's infantry back and taking the ground. Never short of courage or aggression, Essex is known to have fought in the front rank of his own regiment with a half-pike, although this leads modern critics to question his battlefield command and control. He did however quickly learn his lesson and at First Newbury he explored much of the battlefield beforehand and during the

fighting rode around his part of the field overseeing what was happening and issuing orders in response to the changing situation.

Edgehill was an inconclusive affair with both sides claiming victory although it somewhat reflected Essex's military abilities. His innate military skills had managed to bring the king's army to battle but flaws in his planning and strategy had him fight without having mustered all his forces. His charisma encouraged his men to fight and to stand when everything looked bleak whilst his personal bravery and aggression were models for his troops. Yet at the crucial time he was found wanting in determination to exploit the advantage his soldiers bought him thus revealing what today is called a lack of killer instinct. Furthermore, probably responding to Parliament's charge not to endanger the king's life, he permitted Charles and his army to escape the field and left open their route to London. He did however, have the ability to see the need to protect the capital, and having given orders for the care of his wounded, and gathered and rested his forces, he engineered a rapid march back to London before the king's army could reap the rewards of having their way clear. On 7 November Essex arrived back in the capital to a hero's welcome.

Five days later on 12 November Prince Rupert, the king's German nephew, led an attack upon the small parliamentarian garrison of Brentford and heavily defeated them. The royalist troops then ran amok and sacked the town. Their pillage and atrocities panicked Parliament and the City who exhorted men to join the army to resist the king's impending attack. The royal army duly arrived at Turnham Green northwest of London where Essex had not only assembled his own army but deployed his considerable political skills and influence with the dignitaries and citizens of London to muster a total of about 24,000 men to bar the king's way. In this task he enlisted the valuable help of Philip Skippon and the London Trained Bands. Essex's initial deployment at Turnham was sound but he vacillated and made changes which he was later obliged to reverse. Although he said he was ill-advised, this showed that he did not have a plan to which he adhered regardless of changes in situation and implications. To some that is being flexible, to others it is indecisive. However he did have the ability to admit he might have erred and had the courage to do something about it. Moreover, such was his charisma that appeals for provender for his troops resulted in an exodus of common people from the City bringing foodstuffs and other provisions to sustain their lord general and his men. At the end of the day, seeing the numbers Essex had assembled in his force the royalists, being substantially numerically inferior, withdrew after an exchange of gunfire and musketry. Essex was again the hero of the hour and there are no records of anybody demonstrating in favour of the king or lobbying for the legality of his army being permitted to enter London.

The king was allowed to retire to Oxford where he set up his royalist court and indeed his own subservient Parliament. Perhaps Essex should have followed the king and fallen on his army as it retreated but it assumes his army was in a fit state to do so. Admittedly there were an enormous number of men on Turnham Green but how many of them could be relied upon to take the offensive is debateable. Of Essex's own army, very many of the Foot

were raw recruits hastily fed into the regiments to make up the numbers post-Edgehill and those left in strategic garrisons. Even the Horse that had seen action might understandably have been wary given their drubbings at Powick and Edgehill. The London Trained Bands, although willing to march out to the suburbs to defend the capital would hardly have been enthusiastic about setting out for a greater march some distance away from their homes. It is a foolish armchair general who criticises a decision without being in full possession of the background of the army or an understanding of the situation. Rather than set out on the folly of following the king, Essex wisely let him go. Oxford may have become England's royal capital and Charles assembled a growing army of his own, but in and around London, Essex rebuilt the regiments badly mauled at Edgehill, reorganised those which had run and sought to profit from the sense of victory engendered by Turnham and recruit more men. He even developed his relationship with those who had authority over the Trained Bands.

It was not an easy task. By the close of 1642 Essex had a smaller army than Charles, and his military problems were greater. Although he had to maintain an offensive posture he had a frightened and apprehensive Parliament and City to protect, whereas the king's court could function wherever it moved – which might have been highly inconvenient but was potentially far more flexible. Although many of the university colleges openly supported the king, there was no particular love lost between the majority of Oxford's inhabitants and their royalist occupiers, so the king could allow Oxford to fall. If London fell it would spell disaster to the parliamentarian cause.

Parliament tried to keep Essex on a tight rein as his men were its principal protection force but it created other field armies to take more offensive roles. The two most successful of these forces were those of the Earl of Manchester and Sir William Waller. Edward Montagu, Viscount Mandeville, later Earl of Manchester, commanded the Army of the Eastern Association, which was formed mainly from militia troops raised in Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. Sir William Waller, like Essex a veteran of de Vere's campaign and the wars in the Low Countries, commanded a highly mobile force formed in the southeast but then switched to the west. The careers of these two rival commanders and their forces are yet another topic beyond the scope of this work, but suffice it to say that all three men disliked each other and indeed were jealous of each others' successes. As commander-in-chief Essex proved unsupportive and uncooperative to both so-called subordinates, reflecting the lessons learnt during his upbringing among the power-plays and petty rivalries of the Stuart nobility.

Modern historians have made much of the quarrels between Essex and Waller but they were not the only two supposedly-cooperating senior officers whose arguments and mutual dislike inhibited their proficiency. The animosity between Manchester and Cromwell permeated the actions of the Army of the Eastern Association whilst in Wiltshire the two leading parliamentarian officers of the county, Sir Walter Hungerford and Sir Edward Baynton actually arrested each other. To single Essex out as particularly difficult and a source of antagonism is unfair.

In 1643, Essex achieved three major military triumphs of his own. He went onto the offensive with his army and his first success was in taking the royalist-held town of Reading with its bridges over the Kennet and its important bridge over the Thames at Caversham. He did so after a siege of ten days and the occupation was remarkable in that he quickly quelled a potentially disastrous breach in discipline, forbade looting and punished those who disobeyed. Parliament may have expected him to push on to attack Oxford, and it was highly critical when he did not do so, thinking him again unwilling to actually destroy the royal army and capture the king. It may be true that Essex still harboured a longing for a negotiated settlement or foresaw the difficulties of dealing with the perfidious monarch that were to bedevil Cromwell once he had secured his person. However, perhaps the more military reason to explain Essex's reluctance to launch a full scale offensive is rather more telling. The change in the scale of the typhus outbreak in Reading to epidemic proportions shortly after the fall, seriously weakened the army's numerical strength, whilst the loss of officers at the skirmishes of Chinnor and South Weston, and the Battle of Chalgrove seriously weakened its command and control. Moreover, the army's pay was in arrears which put a strain upon his men's trust of their general and undermined discipline. Again the full implications of a situation need to be appreciated in order to arrive at a reasoned judgement. Essex was a good enough general not to take the field in an assault upon the well-defended royal capital with a depleted and disease-stricken army lacking in experienced officers, nor with one in a potentially mutinous condition due to poverty and lack of resources. A good measure of Essex the caring general can be seen in his willingness to risk even more opposition in London and even more unpopularity with the civil authorities as he fought hard to have money and supplies handed over to the army, especially as it was not doing their bidding.

In the final analysis it should be noted that after his army had recovered, been reinforced and was both fed and paid, Essex showed no reluctance to go either on the offensive and to march to the relief of Gloucester.

Gloucester was one of the last remaining strongholds loyal to the Parliament in the west and had been holding out against a siege by a large king's army. After some skilful work in the political manoeuvrings with Parliament and the London authorities, and in dealing with his fellow senior officers in assembling a suitable force, Essex got his venture to effect the relief of Gloucester underway. His advance to that city was fraught with worry, and operations involving several small engagements were planned and executed with skill. Admittedly he was aided by the king's instruction that he was not to be met in a large open battle but merely to be hindered in his approach; however he had to fight on a few occasions and did so competently, showing understanding of the use of both mixed arms and terrain. He was also clever in his choice of route to Gloucester especially in the final stages of the campaign down the Severn Valley making good use of the type of countryside which favoured his army rather than Rupert's. Essex caused the king to abandon the siege and triumphantly marched his men into Gloucester on 8 September, bringing the hard-pressed defenders much needed provisions, ammunition and even cannon.

However, although the royal army had withdrawn it was still within striking distance of Gloucester, and Essex needed to return with his army to London. He performed another competent piece of strategic planning and execution by feinting north to Tewkesbury to gather provisions before turning and racing for Hungerford and its bridge over the River Kennet. In this he even organised his bridging train to accompany his move and erect a bridge of boats over the Severn so as to facilitate both supply and continue the ruse of going further north. After switching direction and marching south he made a lightning and successful strike at Cirencester and managed to fight off Rupert and a large detachment of cavalry sent to intercept him and delay his progress to Hungerford. The battle fought on Aldbourne Chase south of Swindon resulted from the royalist Horse being able to surprise Essex's army which must say something about poor arrangements for scouting, but Essex and his senior commanders managed to repel this attack and continue the march. Eventually the parliamentarians reached Newbury only to find the royal army had cut across the Berkshire Downs and arrived before them. Critics have said Essex was wrong to choose the Hungerford-Kintbury-Newbury road but it was a major route in its day and it had the benefit of putting the Kennet between his strung-out column and any royalist attack.

The prior arrival of the king's army occasioned the 1st Battle of Newbury, 20 September 1643, in which Essex demonstrated a sound understanding of the need for battlefield reconnaissance and the practice of battlefield tactics. The result was that his army, having fought the royalists to a standstill one day, offered battle on the next. Essex had executed a 'secure the centre, feint with the left and punch with the right' series of evolutions and on day two an early occupation of ground and sound deployment worked perfectly. The offer to renew the fight being refused, Essex, rather than be lured into attacking a weakened royal army in a defensive position, wisely maintained his objective and continued his homeward march to Reading and then London. Once again Essex and his army were feted on arrival in the capital amid scenes of great rejoicing. With the taking of Reading, the relief of Gloucester and the tactically successful Battle of Newbury in one campaign season, Essex was a hero.

Parliament's representatives spent much of the winter of 1643/44 negotiating an alliance with the Scots Covenanters which was agreed and formalised by disbanding the Committee of Safety and replacing it with the Committee of Both Kingdoms; naturally Essex was a member. However, there was a problem; the entrance of the Scots into the war fanned the division between the peace party and those who favoured inflicting a total defeat upon Charles. Pym died in December 1643 and the loss of this strong character who kept these two arguing factions in relative harmony led to more disagreements and recriminations.

The early months of 1644 were full of political problems for Essex who found himself having to remodel his army and reduce its size at the same time as supporting other generals' theatres of operation. Essex was a believer in continuity and his regiment's esprit de corps, his rationale being that comradeship and shared experiences were a great advantage in battlefield

situations. He was very keen that his best officers should not be reduced, stating:

> [with regard to] most of the officers of the field, I have scored them that I know them to be fit. For the captains whomsoever shall be fit to have the charge the colonel will give the best account to you … it will be a great encouragement to have men who have ventured their lives in this just quarrel [and] not to remove officers from regiments that are to continue without just proofs against them … [1]

His experiences following the officer loses at Chalgrove were too fresh to willingly repeat the situation.

It also says a great deal for the lord general that he was able successfully remodel his army and keep up the morale of his reduced forces, so that they were able to confidently take the field again in mid-May. The Thames Valley campaign was one which the newly formed Committee of Both Kingdoms had ordered Essex to undertake with the support of Waller's army. Despite the considerable animosity between the two men, they cooperated successfully during the encirclement of Oxford and the initial pursuit of the king, although they only met on two occasions during this period.

The whole expedition was handled with great assurance and decisiveness by Essex, who, as soon as he had occupied and secured Reading, sent Robartes with a flying column to threaten Abingdon. This was so successful that it panicked the royalist garrison into abandoning the Thames-side town, a decision that they were to bitterly regret. Essex's orders to prevent the looting of Abingdon reflect the Earl's attempts to win the hearts and minds of the oppressed inhabitants which unfortunately were undone by Waller's troops a few days later. Their bad behaviour was to be much highlighted in Essex's future letters to his political masters. After Abingdon, the lord general again acted with great skill and alacrity by managing a night time crossing of the River Thames at Sandford Ferry, unnoticed by the many royalist pickets who were supposed to have been watching. It is no wonder that Lord Clarendon wrote of 'the deplorable condition to which the King was reduced by the end of May.'[2] However the delays in both parliamentarian armies in crossing the Thames and Cherwell which allowed the king to escape Oxford resulted in Essex changing his plans, and making the fateful decision to take on the western relief campaign.

The quarrels at the political centre of the war persisted and increased with his decision to allocate Waller to shadowing the king, albeit a perfectly reasoned choice given the relative faster speed of Waller's train. Essex withdrew from the rancorous debate and took his army into the West Country much against the wishes of many of the Committee of Both Kingdoms not only because it thought the defeat of the king's army was a higher priority but also argued that whilst there was support for the Parliament in Somerset, Dorset and Devon, ever since Hopton destroyed Chudleigh's local force, Cornwall had been dominated by the royalists. Essex was persuaded that recruits and

1 Wanklyn, M., Choosing Officers for the New Model Army *JSAHR* Vol. 92. No.370. Summer 2014. p.115.

2 Clarendon,op.cit., p. 485.

supplies would be forthcoming in large numbers once he had demonstrated that Parliament's forces could operate that far west. The early part of the campaign went well. In June he set out from central southern England and went through Dorset and Somerset and into Devon taking town after town and managing a notoriously difficult combined land and sea operation. It would seem that this success was to be a weakness for it helped blind him to fully appreciating future difficulties. He was also probably so accustomed to continual criticism that he did not carefully assess the situation.

Having successfully marched through Tiverton, Tavistock and Okehampton he then chose to demonstrate his and Robartes' agreed view that Cornwall was potentially supportive, and that he would clear the southwest through his generalship. This might have been hubris and a bid to challenge Waller's reputation for triumph in the West. He duly marched via Horsebridge to Bodmin but the support Robartes promised and he envisaged was not forthcoming. To add to his troubles the king, having defeated Waller's shadowing army at Cropredy, was following him with a strong force which was being reinforced and supplied by the local inhabitants. However, his strategic brain did not desert him and he fell back to a defensive position at Lostwithiel where he hoped he could be supplied by sea by Warwick. Lostwithiel is often cited as Essex's major mistake but it is reasonable to ask what would have been history's judgement if westerly winds had not prevented Warwick's relief from arriving? Had the ships upon which he relied been able to resupply him, bring in more troops or even lift his army off, or had the land-based relief force not met with a reverse at Bridgwater, the end result may well have been very different.

As it was, the collapse of the Lostwithiel extended perimeter during August 1644 saw Essex again perform competently in adverse circumstances by the drawing in of his defensive position. With no sign of relief and the situation being both desperate and hopeless, in order to save lives Essex not only ordered Balfour to escape with as many Horse as possible but, after a second fight in which he again demonstrated personal bravery, reluctantly agreed to the army surrendering in early September. Again he has been roundly criticised for escaping by boat himself, especially as his men suffered terribly from their treatment as prisoners and in their long march back to parliamentarian depots on the south coast. However, when one examines the triumphal propaganda the royalists made of Essex's failure one can only imagine the jubilation his capture would have engendered. Essex realised that although it was a distasteful decision he needed to avoid captivity. Moreover, he was far too central to Parliament's war effort to be taken out of it at this stage. He was also a capable individual, able to both rally and recruit men and lead them to victories. Although not universally popular among the powerful institutions he still had considerable support in both Houses, the City and even inside the Committee of Both Kingdoms. His decision to escape may be besmirched with accusations of taking a dishonourable course but not among those who understand the necessity of taking decisions that win wars even though they have personal cost. Unfortunately Essex was not to enjoy the time required to be proved right.

Lostwithiel was a disaster for Parliament and it needed a scapegoat. Essex's political enemies and jealous fellow senior officers swooped in a series of vicious personal attacks. Essex fell ill, probably the reoccurrence of tuberculosis made worse by nervous and physical exhaustion. However this did not prevent him from rallying his army at Portsmouth. Here again his experience as a staff officer came to the fore as he oversaw the feeding, re-arming and re-clothing of his men. His strenuous efforts resulted in the recreation of a fighting force that he took to a rendezvous of three armies at Basingstoke and by late October his men were in action again at the Second Battle of Newbury, 27 October 1644. Essex was not with them, however, nor would it seem that he had any involvement in the planning of the battle. This was left in the hands of Manchester and his old nemesis Waller who persuaded his fellow commander that Essex's army should be entrusted to his direction. Essex had retired to his carriage which had been transformed into a mobile sickbed and was conveyed to Reading.

Essex's military career was over. Not only was he too ill to take the field but since the deaths of Pym and Hampden, Cromwell had emerged as the coming man in Parliament and he was very firmly in the camp of those who wanted to wage a more aggressive war against the king. Gradually Essex's health improved and although not fully recovered, he returned to the political fray. His name was linked with that of Manchester in Cromwell's attempts to attack and belittle the peace faction and both Essex and his reputation became involved in the increasingly vitriolic feud between Cromwell and his erstwhile senior officer.

The result of this protracted and bitter argument was the passing, on 19 December 1644 of The Self-Denying Ordnance, which forbade all current members of Parliament from holding military commissions. Essex was well aware that the Self Denying Ordnance was part of the moves to adopt more aggressive policies in Parliament's war effort, along with reorganising its forces and the formation of the New Model Army. Essex, Manchester and the House of Lords resisted the bill for a few months but so as to avoid the implied disgrace of being dismissed under the terms of this legislation and because he was still ill, Essex resigned his commission as commander in chief of the army on 2 April 1645. The following day the Lords capitulated and passed the act. The Self-Denying Ordnance did not preclude members of either House being re-commissioned if deemed fit, but Essex's detractors and political enemies were too numerous for there to be a chance of this happening and Sir Thomas Fairfax was appointed in his stead and made lord general of the New Model Army.[3]

Although no longer its commander there were concerns about what his army would do. The men who had fought for him for so long still retained affection for their old general and it was wondered if they would go willingly into the ranks of the New Model Army or accept disbandment and dispersal. Consequently the considerable majority of Essex's infantry was mustered under Skippon at Forebury in Reading on 5 April 1645 where his regiments were to be formally reduced.

3 Cromwell was one of the men deemed fit to be both an MP and an army officer.

Forbury Gardens, Reading, site of the reduction of Essex's Infantry. (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

However before being stood down, his soldiers were promised constant payment without excuses, a bonus of two week's wages, new coats, breeches, shirts, caps, stockings, shoes, and snapsacks, in addition to new, more modern weapons, if they would enlist in the New Model Army. This convinced the vast majority that re-enlistment was the best option for their future rather than face dismissal and possible starvation.[4] Both the officers and the soldiers were quietly reduced and marched to the three parish churches of Reading and were re-enlisted. Whitelock records that "Many expected a great Mutiny upon this regulating of the old Army, but it came off better than was expected; and much therein was attributed to the prudence and gallantry of the Major General."[5]

Essex had other interests. Alongside promoting the welfare of his former soldiers and although not an active figure in its ranks, he was an eminent supporter of the Presbyterians who were fast becoming a faction in their own right. A leading Presbyterian was Edward Massey, the erstwhile Governor of Gloucester whom Essex had relieved in 1643 and who had remained Essex's friend. He had been promoted to command the Army of the Western Association in May 1644 and proved an adept general officer, so much so that the Presbyterian faction saw in him and his army an opportunity to create a force capable of being a counterbalance to Fairfax and Cromwell's New Model Army. Essex was embroiled in the plans to enlarge Massey's force and give it autonomy, but much to his disappointment Parliament forestalled these efforts and ordered Massey to disband his army in October 1645. His detractors claim Essex was bribed in late 1645 to cease his opposition and making waves by Parliament's gift of both Somerhill House, a sequestered royalist property in Kent that had belonged to his half-brother Ulick Burke, and a vote taken to create him a duke; although he received the house his dukedom never materialised. The cause for which Essex fought triumphed just before he died in 1646, although it is unlikely he would not have appreciated the victory, he certainly would not have backed the king's execution, nor would he have had any part of it.

4 Many had given up or lost their previous employment or small businesses on going to the wars.

5 Whitelock B., *Memorials of the English Affairs*. (London, 1683) p.135.

The Church of St Laurence, Reading, where many of Essex's old soldiers were re-enlisted into Fairfax's New Model Army. (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

'Olde Robin' was very much liked by his men, having on at least two occasions fought with his regiment with pike in hand, and he frequently marched at the head of his army, even in adverse weather. It is with sadness then that for a commander who was so well liked by his men that after the closing of the last New Model Army muster book on the evening of their 'reducement' and re-enlistment, Olde Robin's Foote and Olde Robin's Horse were no more.

Still living at Essex House he was a guest at a hunting party in Windsor Forest in early September 1646 when he suffered a severe heart attack. Incapacitated he was taken back to his London home where he died four days later, on 14 September 1645. He was 55.

Ever popular with Londoners his funeral was a magnificent affair with a grand procession through the streets, people lining the route to Westminster Abbey to bid farewell to their old hero. Parliament contributed £5,000 to its costs. Inside the abbey the chancel was fully draped in black and a funeral effigy of him in the red breeches and buffcoat of his military uniform, and his parliamentary robes was displayed beneath an ornate catafalque. Essex was laid to rest with fitting pomp, ceremony and affection.

Richard Vines in his funeral oration for Essex spoke of,

> … the honourable souldiery, whose great names which while they wore his Orange in the field could have daunted death it self …

and of the lord general's

> … love and respect to the Souldiery, such as became as brave Christian, he would not Turkishly fill ditches, or stop Cannon with them. His hand of reliefe was not shut or short to rescue prisoners. He afforded honourable respect to naked and wounded valour. His countenance paid and arm'd his soldiers, when sometimes they wonted both: and no wonder if his Schoole bred such a gallant Infantry which had such a Master, and such an Usher.[6]

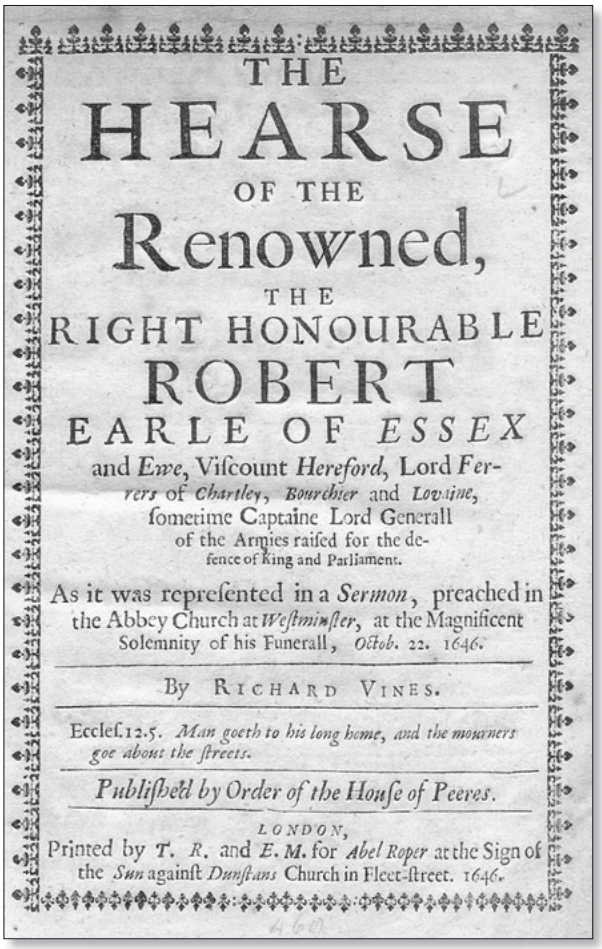
The "lately deceased" Robert Earl of Essex, from a contemporary engraving. (Turton Collection)

6 Vines, R., *The Hearse of the Renowned The Honourable Robert, Earle of Essex,* (London, 1646), pp. 5 & 29.

His effigy was attacked by a Dorset farmer thought to have been a fanatical ex-royalist soldier who professed he had been visited by an angel who told him to do it.[7] Although repaired it was totally removed at the Restoration on the orders of Charles II. Fortunately this vengeful monarch and his friends left Essex in his tomb in the St. John the Baptist Chapel and spared him the disgrace of being disinterred and abused, a fate they shamefully inflicted upon many of his dead friends and contemporaries.[8]

As he left no issue Essex's earldom became extinct but as quickly as 1661 it was revived by Charles II and awarded to one of his supporters Arthur Capel. His viscountcy was traced back through his surviving relations and given to the youngest grandson of his grandfather's cousin.

Was Essex the dullard and incompetent general portrayed in much of the modern literature? It is our belief that this book has shown him to be a man of some considerable military staff work and indeed some battlefield command experience when he was catapulted into high command by the rapid spiral into civil war. Once installed he demonstrated military knowledge, competence and skill.


THE
HEARSE
OF THE
Renowned,
THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
ROBERT
EARLE OF *ESSEX*
and *Ewe*, Viſcount *Hereford*, Lord *Fer-*
rers of *Chartley*, *Bourchier* and *Lovaine*,
ſometime Captaine Lord Generall
of the Armies raiſed for the de-
fence of King and Parliament.
As it was repreſented in a *Sermon*, preached in
the Abbey Church at *Weſtminſter*, at the Magnificent
Solemnity of his Funerall, *Octob.* 22. 1646.
By RICHARD VINES.
Eccleſ. 12.5. *Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners*
goe about the ſtreets.
Publiſhed by Order of the Houſe of Peeres.
LONDON,
Printed by *T. R.* and *E. M.* for *Abel Roper* at the Sign of
the *Sun* againſt *Dunſtans* Church in Fleet-ſtreet. 1646.

Title page of the sermon preached at Essex's funeral. (Turton Collection)

The best practice of the *Art Militaire*, of the seventeenth century was divided between several often conflicting theories advocated by various military leading lights. Senior officers in the early part of the British Civil Wars tended to adopt the theories of whichever military system they had learnt and with which they had become familiar whilst serving on the continent. The Thirty Years War had seen the evolution of various ways of deploying and fighting armies. There were a complicated array of styles, but when greatly simplified, they can be divided into four distinct 'systems': the Spanish used by Ferdinando Alverez; the Dutch, produced by Maurice of Nassau; the Swedish from Gustavus Adolphus; and the German which saw a steady development under Tilly, Wallenstein and Mansfeld. Each of these systems and the merits of following them gave rise to a plethora of manuals and drill books, some of which were mere money-making ventures full of copying, blending and even downright wild imaginings. Civil War generals like Essex, had to synthesise what they read with what they were told and model it according to their experience and what they had seen. For a full explanation of these various systems as well as their advocated deployments and tactics, we recommend the exceptional work of: Roberts, K., *Pike and Shot Tactics 1590 – 1660* (Oxford, Osprey Elite Series, 2010).

7 Woolrych. A., *Britain in Revolution 1625-1660* (Oxford, OUP. 2002), p. 348.

8 The inscribed stone can still be seen today.

In 1642 Essex appears, in line with the most common contemporary practice, to have believed in training and readying his regiments for action and in producing a tactical deployment plan based upon his chosen system that enabled his army to fight in the manner he thought best. This was his 'battle plan'. Usually this battle plan would be drawn up before a campaign began and explained to the senior officers who formed his Council of War. The army, once assembled, would be arrayed in this chosen form so that regimental officers knew where they were in the line and what they were expected to do. Essex began his command of the army favouring the Dutch deployment system. He created three basic units: the Vanguard, the Battel and the Rearguard; they would ostensibly march in that order and deploy for action with the Van on the right, the Battel in the centre and the Rear on the left.

How each of these large sub-units deployed was also a matter of the general's choosing. Again there were variations of each system, each favouring a different style of tactical fighting. At Edgehill, Essex used one of three basic Dutch battlefield deployments, placing his Foot in his centre with his two flanks comprised of Horse. The infantry regiments were set up with pikes in the centre and the musketeers in two 'sleeves' either side. They stood eight ranks deep. The Horse was arrayed in six-deep formations of separate troops so as to enable them to use their firepower in a variation of the complicated 'caracole'; moreover they had 'interlarded' bodies of musketeers amongst them to increase the destructiveness of the fire. Having arrayed his force Essex placed himself in the front rank of his own regiment of Foot, half-pike in hand, ready to fight. He had done his job and expected others to do theirs according to their training and instruction.

Things did not go exactly to plan at Edgehill, and Essex was in no position to order anything different during the battle. However, he was able to learn lessons and adapt. Whilst still deploying in the initial Dutch manner at the 1st Battle of Newbury, he took overall command of the Van and was reported as riding about its sector of the field exercising command and taking battlefield decisions. He apparently also advocated this style of command decision-making from a position of vantage to his sub-commanders Skippon and Robartes. On a minor tactical level he seems to have used dragoons to support his Horse rather than commanded muskets, which he used in a forward-thinking advance position with a degree of flexibility to shift position according to circumstances. Not all his commanders were adaptable to new ways. Stapleton still favoured the firepower basis for the Horse, rejecting the impact approach advocated by Gustavus and copied by Rupert. However, his training of the men and his command and control over them improved to such a degree that he was able to first beat Rupert's vaunted Oxford Horse then rally after retiring.

Essex's own tactical innovation came with devising the way of attacking first Wilmot's and then Rupert's unsupported Horse during the advance to Gloucester. By taking and holding ground with Foot and using his own cavalry to threaten any attempt to advance upon them, he brought up artillery to hurt his enemy where they stood. Covered by guns and protected by cavalry he then advanced musketeers to fire into the stationary royalists.

In this he evolved a successful tactic of combined arms, pin and hit which meant his opponents could neither advance upon those menacing them, nor reply to increasing losses, and thus forced them to retire and even quit the field.

A somewhat familiar Dutch deployment was also employed by Essex's army at the 2nd Battle of Newbury. Although under the overall command of Waller, both Skippon and Balfour made excellent use of the command freedom with which Essex had entrusted them and the Horse were able to liaise with their dragoons for clearing the hedges on the southern flank and make great headway against the royal forces; something which eluded Cromwell in the northern sector.

There are very few contemporary examples of parliamentarian battle plans, and sadly none for any of Essex's engagements, but those which do exist for Marston Moor and Naseby show the same reliance upon the basic Dutch system but with certain German modifications as lessons were learnt and innovations proved to be successful. Essex cannot be said to have always been a great battlefield commander but he knew enough to begin the war by adopting a system that had a potential winning format and a degree of familiarity, and then to adapt according to both terrain demands and experience.

Essex repeatedly proved himself able to motivate men to enlist into his armies and to follow him into danger. Not only was he able to form the focus for raising Parliament's initial army, his continual lobbying on its behalf ensured it was maintained even in extreme circumstances of hardship and despite personal attack. His rebuilding and re-equipping of his army after both the outbreak of the typhus epidemic at Reading and the atrocious nightmare return march from Lostwithiel are testaments to his abilities. He appears to have had an affinity with his men and the common people caught up in the war, which is surprising given his class and background. His insistence upon forbidding plundering is remarkable in an age when such compassion was not a trait usually found in the military. Even the king had no scruples when allowing his men to beat up and even sack captured towns, as Brentford discovered.

Essex was skilled in conducting strategic marches and led successful protracted campaigns across carefully selected countryside chosen to suit both his situation and the constituent elements of his forces. His use of enclosed terrain to counter the advantages open country would give to Rupert's Horse in his advance to Gloucester showed sound military thinking and so too did the use of the Kennet to shield his army from a flank attack prior to Newbury. His march towards Tewkesbury as a combined resupplying and deceptive operation was well conceived and executed, and the lightening strike at Cirencester resulted in a triumphant coup. His series of marches and planned operations to arrive and take Reading was well performed and so too was his attempt on Oxford, obliging the king to quit his capital. He was guilty of over-estimating his potential support in Cornwall, and should have taken more care in understanding the situation before committing himself to the venture which resulted in the surrender at Lostwithiel. It was a mistake

and all commanders make those, especially when fickle weather is involved in denying support from the sea.

Tactically he understood both the micro and the wider pictures. His refusal to attack up the Edgehill escarpment was an easy decision and so too was the drawing in of the extended perimeter at Lostwithiel, but his choice of routes to and from Gloucester and his approach to Reading from an unexpected quarter demonstrated more military appreciation. So too was the encirclement of Oxford. His management of larger battles is rightly questioned at Edgehill when he placed himself in the front rank of his own regiment of Foot, but his thorough understanding of the seizure of Round Hill as a fulcrum for a punch across Wash Common whilst feinting toward Newbury on the left, and using the reserve to plug gaps was masterful. His use of the hill and staggered deployments to filter his force, including its baggage, across the field in the face of the enemy and to get the army out of danger and en route for Reading was almost text book battle tactics in the grand manner, whilst his use of combined arms to pin and then oust the royalist Horse from their positions at both Oddington Hill and Stow-on-the-Wold demonstrated an appreciation of minor tactical skill. Although he might have made some errors, Essex was no incompetent when it came to deploying and using troops both for the approach to and the engagement in battle.

Essex has been criticised for not prosecuting the war as fervently as some wished, for not driving after the defeat and destruction of the king's army and the capture of his person. For that he has been labelled slothful, dilettante and incompetent. Before accepting this judgement uncritically it is necessary to examine what he was actually asked to do by the Parliament that gave him his commission and we make no excuse for printing it here in full.

> Whereas, upon serious Consideration of the present and imminent Dangers of Force and Violence, which, at this time, threaten the Parliament and the whole Kingdom, through the cunning practice of Papists, and malicious Counsels of divers ill-affected Persons, inciting his Majesty to raise men, make great Provisions for War, and place Garrisons in Towns and other Places of Importance within this Kingdom; and by Terror of Arms, to compel his Subjects to submit to a Commission of Array, contrary to Law; whereby god's true Religion and the Liberty of the Kingdom are like to be suppressed, and the whole Frame of the antient and well-tempered Government of this Realm to be dissolved and destroyed, and the English Nation inthralled, in their Persons and Estates, to an arbitrary Power; The Lords and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, according to the Duty and Trust which lies upon them, for Prevention of these great Mischiefs and Preservation of the Safety of his Majesty's Person, the Peace of the Kingdom, and the Defence of the Parliament, resolved and ordained, That an Army be forthwith raised; and that the Trained Bands, and other Forces of the Kingdom, be put into a Posture and Condition fit to oppose any Force and Insurrection by Papists, or ill-affected Persons, against the Public Peace and Laws of the Kingdom, however countenanced by any pretended Commission or Authority from his Majesty, and finding it most necessary that some Persons of Honour, Wisdom, and Fidelity, should be appointed to command the said

Army and Forces; and having had long Experience and certain Knowledge that Robert Earl of Essex is, every Way, qualified for a Trust of so high a Nature and Concernment, in regard of the Nobility of his Birth, his great Judgment in Martial Affairs, approved Integrity and Sufficiency in divers Honourable Employments and Commands in the said Public Service of this State; and in whom his Majesty reposed such Confidence, that, when he went into Scotland the last Summer, he left him General of all the South Parts of the Kingdom; and especially in regard of his Faithfulness and good Affections to the Liberty, Peace, and Prosperity of the Kingdom, in this present Parliament abundantly manifested; and of the great Honour and Confidence among the well-affected People of the Kingdom, which he hath hereby gained: The said Lords and Commons do constitute and ordain him, the said Robert Earl of Essex, to be the Captain-General and Chief Commander of the Army appointed to be raised, and of all other Forces of the Kingdom, for the Ends and Purposes aforementioned; and that he the said Earl shall have and enjoy all Power, Titles, Preheminence, Authority, Jurisdiction, and Liberties, incident and belonging to the said Office of CaptainGeneral, throughout the whole Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales, in as large and ample a Manner as any other General of an Army in this Kingdom hath lawfully used exercised, and enjoyed; to have, hold, and execute the Office of Captain-General, in such Manner, and according to such Instructions, as he shall, from Time to Time, receive from both Houses of Parliament.

And do further grant and ordain, That the said Earl shall have Power to raise and levy Forces, as well Men at Arms, as other Horsemen and Footmen of all kinds, and meet for the Wars, in all Counties, Cities, Boroughs, Towns Corporate, and other Places, of this Kingdom and Dominion of Wales, as well within Liberties as without; and them to conduct and lead against all and singular Enemies, Rebels, Traitors, and other like offenders, and every of their Adherents; and with them to fight, and them to invade, resist, repress, subdue, pursue, slay, and kill; to put in Execution all and singular other Things for the levying and governing of the said Forces, preserving the Safety of his Majesty's Person, Defence of the Parliament, and the Conservation of this Realm and the Subjects thereof in Peace, howsoever countenanced by any pretended Commission or Authority from his Majesty, or otherwise; and shall have Power to assign and appoint a Lieutenant-General under him, the said Earl, in his Stead to do and execute all and every the Powers and Authority granted to him, the said Earl, also to appoint a Lieutenant-General of the Troops of Horse and all such Commanders and Officers as shall be necessary and requisite for the Government and Command of the said Army; and likewise one Provost-Martial for the Execution of his Commands, according to this Ordinance.

And for the better Execution of the Premises, it is ordered and ordained, that the said Earl shall have Power to command all Forts and Castles, already fortified or to be fortified; and to remove, displace, or continue, the Captains, Lieutenants, and Soldiers: As likewise all Ships, Barks and Vessels, which he, the said Earl, shall think meet, from Time to Time, for the Use and Service of the said Army and Forces, under his Government and Command; likewise to give Rules, Instructions, and Directions, for the Governing, Leading, and Conducting the said Army, and for the Punishing of all Mutinies, Tumults, Rapines and other Crimes, and Misdemeanors of any Person whatsoever in the same, according to

> the Course and Custome of the Wars, and Law of the Land; and the said Rules and Instructions to cause to be proclaimed, performed and executed; safety charging and requiring both the said Lieutenant-Generals, Provost-Martial, and all other Officers and Soldiers, of the said Army; as likewise all Lieutenants of Counties, Sheriffs, Deputy Lieutenants, Officers of the Ordnance, Commanders of Forts, Justices of Peace, Mayors, Bailiffs, and other his Majesty's Officers and Subjects whatsoever, to be aiding and assisting, and obedient to him, the said Earl, in the Execution of the said Office of Captain-General, for the Ends and Purposes, and in the Manner aforesaid.
>
> And do likewise ordain and declare, That the said Earl, the Commanders and Officers of the said Army, and all his Majesty's Officers and Subjects whatsoever, in the Execution of the Premises, shall be saved harmless, and defended by the Power and Authority of both Houses of Parliament.[9]
>
> 15 July 1642

Essex was commissioned to put an end to the imminent dangers of force and violence which threatened the kingdom and to oppose those ill-affected persons who had enticed the king into war and compelled people to enlist in their army by terrorising them. Neither the king himself nor his soldiers were to blame. They were not the enemy, nor the target of Parliament's wrath. It was the king's 'evil advisors', many of them papists who were trying to suppress god's true religion and the liberty of the kingdom as well as to destroy the government of the realm so as to seize power themselves. Essex was specifically charged to ensure the safety of his majesty's person and the preservation of peace. It does not say wage all out war to bring the king to justice. Neither does it say he is appointed to kill the royalist soldiery and destroy the king's armies.

Indeed it says Essex was chosen for his martial experience and understanding not his ability to wage war, and herein lies a distinction. Throughout history men who have been chosen to lead armies have been selected because of their personal qualities: in his commission Essex is lauded not for his determination to achieve victories, for crushing enemies or ruthless prosecution of an aim, but for more peaceable qualities. Although charged to do it with an army, Essex was appointed to avert the dangers of force and violence which threatened the kingdom, not be the author of more. If he appears to lack the desire to seek battles, to fight and destroy other men's lives and sack towns it is not because he does not possess an aggressive nature, it is more likely that being a man of honour, wisdom, and fidelity, he simply adheres to what he has been commissioned to do. He does the job he was given in the way his conscience tells him to do it.

If Essex had a personality flaw it was probably his arrogance and awareness of rank and status that created enemies. His almost constant bickering with Waller and his ill-management of Middleton and the Scots caused him difficulties he could have done without, but he was a product of his social system and accustomed to speaking his mind. He was a competent politician,

9 http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=55735 July 1642: The Parliaments' Commission to the Earl of Essex to be Captain-General of their Army', Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660 (1911),

but not an adroit one. He was however capable of winning and keeping friends even among the movers and shakers of the land, as shown by the steadfastness of Hampden and Pym.

Like all men, Essex was a complex mixture of character traits, personal private experience and social position put into the pressure pot of high command in a civil war. He was a true and faithful servant to Parliament being both personally brave, unstinting in workload and militarily capable. Essex was not the man we often see pilloried for inactivity and stupidity but overall he emerges as a more than competent general and a man able to weather the storms, even those he created himself.

"The sword of the Lord and Gydeon", medal struck in honour of the Lord General from a 19th century engraving. (Turton Collection)

Appendix I

The Foot

Essex's armies were formed of the three basic arms: the infantry, called the Foot, the cavalry, called the Horse and the artillery, called the Ordnance or the Train. There were subdivisions of types of soldiers within each category. Among the Foot, the array of special troops prevalent in Renaissance armies crystallised into two distinct branches: the musketeers or the Shot, names derived from their weapons or what they did; and the pikemen, called the Pike or the Corselets, derived from either their weapons or the body armour they initially wore.

In a well-balanced, mid-seventeenth century army, the Foot made up about two thirds of its strength. However, before the outbreak of the Civil War, there appears to have been only one regular regiment of infantry in the whole of England, that which formed the garrison of the country's main naval base at Portsmouth. The vast majority of the national army were the trained bands regiments: raised in the counties and larger cities, they consisted of part-time soldiers meant for home defence only. However, as the war developed, they were used increasingly by both sides in their field armies and the numerous and well equipped London Trained Bands played a conspicuous part in Essex's campaigns. A Spanish report described the Londoners as commanded by merchants, but that they proved to be very good troops.

On paper an English regiment of infantry was supposed to be composed of 1,200 men divided into ten companies with the colonel's company having 200 men, the lieutenant colonel's160, the sergeant major's 140, and the remaining seven captains' companies each with 100 men. Even at the beginning of the war, only two of Essex's regiments came near to having a full compliment: Holles' with 1,130 and Chomley's with 1,128 men. Essex's own regiment was supposed to have twelve companies and muster 1,500 men which included three extra companies of firelocks, but it never reached that number.

The men listed to serve in the Earl of Essex's Army, and indeed in all Parliament's forces were to receive pay, which although not always regular, was noted as being owed to them. The pay of those who commanded and administered the regiments is set out below.

Table A.I.1: Establishment and Pay per Day of a Regiment of Foot in 1642

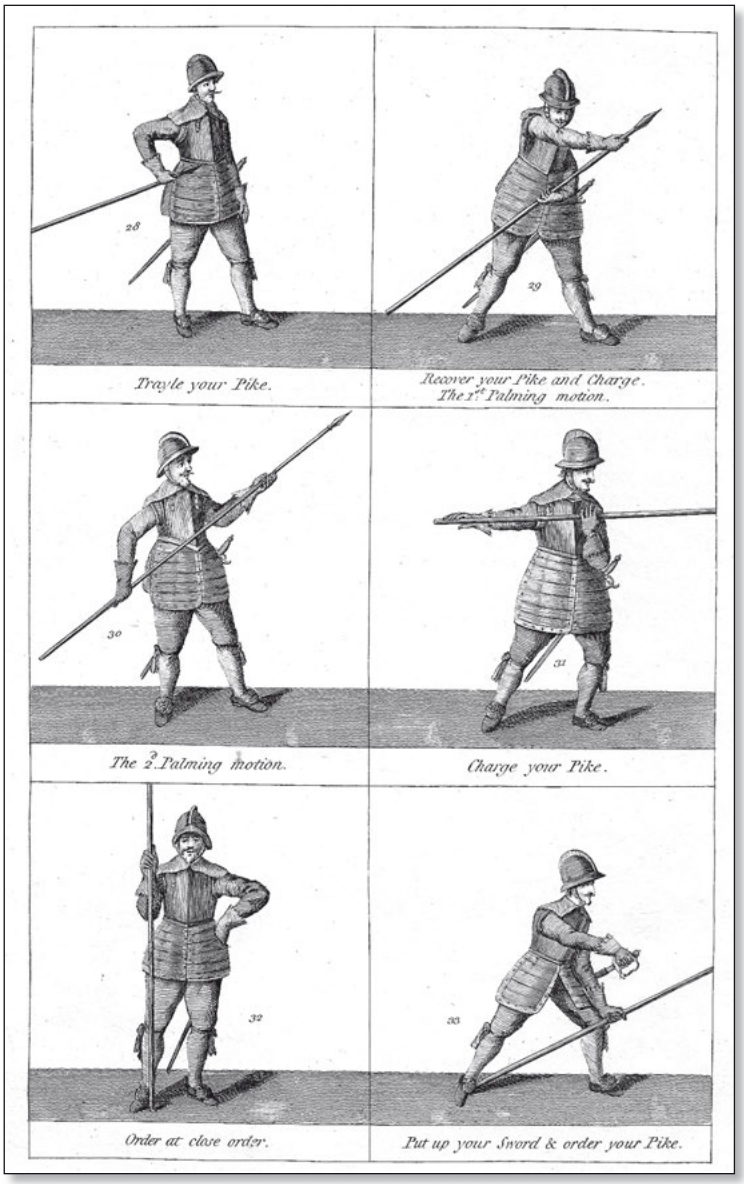
Officers of the Field	Officer Rank	Cost £.s.d
	Colonel	£1.10.00
	Lieutenant Colonel	£0.15.00
	Sergeant Major	£0.09.00
	Quarter Master	£0.05.00
	Provost Marshall	£0.05.00
	Carriage Master	£0.03.00
	Preacher	£0.08.00
	Surgeon	£0.04.00
	Two Mates at 2/6 each	£0.05.00
Company	Captain	£0.15.00
	Lieutenant	£0.04.00
	Ensign	£0.03.00
	Two Sergeants at 1/6 each	£0.03.00
	Two Drummers at 1/- each	£0.02.00
	Three Corporals at 1/- each	£0.03.00

Source: T.N.A. SP 28/140/pt 17/400.

These figures do not include the pay of the ordinary 'private sentinel' as the common foot soldier was called. If he volunteered, he was offered up to ten shillings 'entertainment money' to buy necessities to enable him to be conducted up to his new regiment, and then constant pay of between four shillings and eight pence to six shillings per week. However, he received this so infrequently that it caused continual problems with discipline and of course desertion. Essex fought a constant battle with his political masters the Committee of Safety (later the Committee of Both Kingdoms) and Sir Gilbert Gerrard, the Treasurer of the Army, who was based at the Guildhall, to supply adequate funds for his soldiers. It is testament to the lord general's relationship with his men that he could keep so many with him in the field for so long, particularly as the reality and attrition of the war soon dried up the supply of willing volunteers and reliance had to be put upon enforced impressments to fill the ranks.

As mentioned and listed earlier in this book, the infantry of Essex's first field army consisted of twenty regiments, although from the very beginning of the war, two units, Lord Stamford's, and Sir John Merrick's served on detachment in the West, and had ceased to be part of his command by the end of 1642.

To bolster London's defences whilst Essex was engaged on the Edgehill campaign, the Lord Admiral, Richard Rich, Earl of Warwick, was ordered by Parliament on 22 October to raise a reserve army from the trained bands of the capital and the eastern counties. These militia soldiers were reluctant however to serve outside their own areas, so in the end Warwick stood down and seven regular regiments of foot were eventually raised instead. How



Pike drill from an 18th century copy of a 17th century drill manual. (Turton Collection)

many of the men forming the new regiments were lured away from those trained bands with promises of money, clothes and food is not recorded.

Regiments acquired after Warwick's Army stood down

Sergeant Major Philip Skippon's Regiment
Colonel James Holborne's Regiment
Colonel Harry Barclay's Regiment
Colonel John Holmstead's Regiment
Colonel George Langham's Regiment
Colonel Henry Bulstrode's Regiment
Colonel Anthony Stapley's Regiment
These were joined in early 1643 by Colonel Francis Thompson's.

Both Holborne and Barclay were Scots, as were a number of their officers and men, and most of the other units had officers and possible men drawn from the broken regiments of Holles, Wharton and Charles Essex. All these regiments, with the exception of Stapley's which went to garrison Chichester, became part of Essex's main army by early 1643.

There were two further regiments of Foot that were raised in London the autumn of 1642, Colonel Randall Mainwaring's which served with Essex on the Gloucester campaign, and Colonel Venn's, which became the permanent garrison of the strategically important Windsor Castle.

From surviving warrants, it would appear initially that that all these new units were reasonably up to strength, and like Essex's first army, were issued with coats, shirts, shoes and snapsacks.

Table A.I.2: Coat Colours of the Reserve Army

Regiment	Coat	Lining	T.N.A source
Skippon	Red	Yellow	SP 28/3B/412
Stapley	Red	Yellow	SP 28/3B/479
Barclay	Red	Blue	SP 28/3A/116
Holmstead	Red	White	SP 28/3/504
Langham	Blue	White	SP 28/127

Venn's Regiment had grey coats lined yellow and Mainwaring's red lined white.[1]

The popular military handbook of the day stated that musketeers ' … must be armed with a good musket, the barrel four foot long, the bore of 12 bullets in the pound … a rest, bandelier, head-piece, a good sword, girdle and hangers.' And that pikemen,

> … must be armed with a pike seventeen feet long, head and all; the diameter of the staff to be one inch 3/4, the head to be well steeled, 8 inches long, broad, strong and sword-pointed; the cheeks 2 foot long, well riveted; the butt end bound with a ring of iron, a gorget, back, breast, tassets and head piece, a good sword of 3 foot long, cutting and stiff pointed with girdle and hangers.[2]

The smoothbore, muzzle-loading, matchlock musket was the main weapon of the civil wars and Essex's armies. Most existing examples are about 4 feet long and weigh about 12 pounds. Calibres, or barrel widths, vary from ½ to ¾ of an inch and the weight of the lead balls they fired varied from 10 to 16 to the pound. The muskets turned out during the rush to arms came from a variety sources including the workshops of the Minories (the area north of the Tower of London), but later vast quantities were imported from Holland. Earlier muskets fired balls of about 2 ounces (8 bore) but, on average, those first acquired for Essex's men were anything from 8 to 14 bore. Their weight also varied, the heavier ones 14 to 20 pounds, imitating the Swedish pattern as advocated by Gustavus Adolphus' preference for a heavier projectile, some 10 to 12 bore. As weapon manufacture became more organised muskets produced under the influence of the Dutch military system and issued to Essex's men later in the war tended to be 12 to 14 bore with balls between 1¼ to 1½ ounces.

Essex's early war musketeers would have carried a mixture of old and newer muskets, the older, heavier weapons perhaps necessitating the use of the rest. This was a hand-held barrel support, a simple metal 'U' shape (looking like a rowlock) mounted on a shaft about four to five feet high and resembling a walkers' thumb stick. Manipulating the musket and the rest was such a complicated business that rests came to be frowned upon by young men or those equipped with the more modern, lighter pieces and they fell out of use as the war progressed. Many of Essex's men may have carried rests at Edgehill but they had probably forsaken them by the relief

1 T.N.A 28/261.

2 Robert Ward, *Directions for Musters* (Cambridge1638).

of Gloucester because a benefit enjoyed by Essex's Foot was that Parliament had access to the London gunsmiths who were able to supply cheaper, mass-produced muskets. These did not have as much wood in the stocks and were consequently lighter, thinner and easier to handle.

Old or new, expensive or cheap, they were all single shot, muzzle-loaders and most were fired by soldiers using a burning 'match', saltpetre-soaked cord, which, on pulling the trigger, was pushed into the priming pan by means of a cheap pivoting mechanism called a serpentine. Musketeers used pre-measured charges of gunpowder which were contained in lead-capped, wooden bottles suspended from a leather belt worn across the shoulder called a bandolier.[3] Some poorly equipped musketeers were known to have used pre-measured charges of blackpowder in paper cartridges which they carried in their breeches pockets! For a detailed description of how a musketeer loaded and then fired his weapon please refer to our previous book, Scott. C.L., Turton, A. & Gruber von Arni, E. *Edgehill, the Battle Re-interpreted* (Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2004).

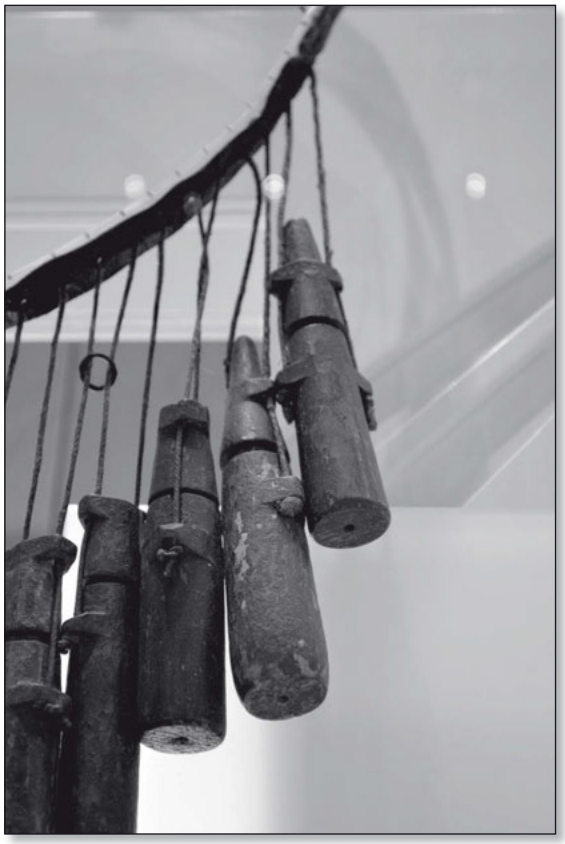
Musket technology had not advanced very far from that of the previous two hundred years; they were still a metal tube secured to a piece of wood using exploding gunpowder to propel a lead ball. They still had an extreme range of about 300 yards but due to projectile velocity and angle only veterans really attempted a shot at 200 yards aimed at a man's chest, and then another at one 150 yards aimed at the groin. Some other soldiers opened fire at 100 yards when the knees became the point of aim, but most fired at less than 100 but more than 50 yards, when the aim was at the feet. At less than 50 yards the trajectory was fairly straight, but practice still encouraged soldiers to aim low to allow for the weapon's kick. It is conjecture but perhaps the experienced officers and sergeants of muskets only fired their blocks at distances below 100 yards and preached the universal doctrine of aiming low. Hitting the human target was one thing, but injuring him was another. Many of the Horse and pikemen wore armour; much of it supposedly shot proof, although it was often not. However the musket of the civil wars era was still a barn door weapon that relied upon massed fire rather than individual accuracy.

The pike was regarded as the more 'noble' weapon of the Foot. It took time to master and the associated postures and drill movements were considered 'a display art' worthy of public demonstration on London's Artillery Ground. It also took physical prowess to handle properly and fighting with it required discipline and trust in ones' neighbours. At its best it was a sixteen-foot long, rounded, ash pole, which was tapered at both ends and fitted with a socketed, razor-sharp, steel head with protective languets and a steel butt ring. The taper of the fighting end was thinner but more gradual so as to compensate for the weight of the steel point in the delicate production of a weapon that had a precise point of balance about six feet off the ground. Handling the pike depended upon the user becoming familiar with this balance until control could be established by almost delicate shifting of handgrips or even movement of the fingers. Pike drill was complicated and exponents were

3 There is no contemporary evidence for the use of the term 'twelve apostles' which appears to be a nineteenth century myth.

required to learn a series of postures which were executed in unison to beat of drum. It was this cohesion which made pike fighting so effective. When a body of pikes are charged, the enemy sees a mass of sharp, steel, stabbing spikes pointed directly at them. If this entity is moving with the impetus of a steady advance then the sight is both awe-inspiring and daunting.

The optimum shape of the point of the pike was much debated in military manuals of the period. Types range from square-section spikes to flat-section lozenges. There was no universal pattern of pike point in use in Essex's armies. Various leaf shapes including an inverted kite were current and most were fashioned by blacksmiths from hollow round tubes, which were flattened and beaten into shape on the anvil, a process which also case-hardened the metal. The other end of the tube was left rounded so as to take the tapered end of the shaft and was probably mounted while hot so as to shrink into its fit. Nails then secured the pre-pierced tubular section of the point to the shaft. Two strips of steel, each about two feet long, were then similarly fastened on either side of the head of the shaft just below the point. These 'languets' were in place to stop the heads being lopped off in battle. On more expensive pikes the languet was a forged part of the whole head and a counter-weight butt ring or short spike was also added, but economies could see both of them vanish altogether.



Bandolier chargers (National Civil War Centre). (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

It is believed that during the early campaigns two pike-fighting methods were in use: one for defending against Horse and the second for fighting Foot. However the old fashioned 'charge for Horse' position with the butt embedded in the ground in front on the right foot and the pike angled forward to about a horse's breast is thought to have been quickly abandoned in favour of a combined 'charge your pike' used against anyone.[4] This involved a body of pikemen coming to 'closest order', meaning the men packed together, shoulder-to-shoulder, to give density to the fighting mass, fusing disparate individuals into a solid, unified block. On coming close to an enemy body, Foot or Horse, the order to 'charge your pike' was given. It involved standing with the right foot drawn back and turned at ninety degrees to the left so that the body-weight was in balance – much like a fencer's 'en-garde' position. The left hand came across and secured the shaft chest high, and the pike was then 'allowed to fall forward' from the upright 'advance' with its weight being taken by the left hand as the body weight was adjusted to the front foot. The right arm was allowed to rise outstretched with the fingers of the right hand checking the impetus whilst the heel of the hand, now on the top of the flat-held weapon, pushed downwards to bring

4 The demonstration of this drill in the film 'Cromwell' has much to answer for.

the whole pike into balance with the left hand acting as the fulcrum. This was then locked into place by the right arm rolling over the top of the shaft which also added more weight to the rear portion and gave better control of the point. Simply by leaning forward the steel tip could stab forward several inches but a lean accompanied by a step and a push forward of both hands and the thrust could reach another three to four feet, with the near body-weight of the man concentrated behind its point. It was a hedge of bright sharpened steel capable of dealing with infantry or cavalry.

At the beginning of the war, an infantry regiment was ideally to have a ratio of two musketeers to one pikeman, but it is difficult to ascertain from issue warrants for arms and armour whether this was achieved at first. Certainly before the arms industry got into gear, and foreign imports could be obtained, Essex had available to him only 1,367 muskets and 354 pikes in the Tower, plus 7,238 muskets brought down from Hull. However by early October 1642, the Committee of Safety's agents had received from abroad, and issued 2,690 muskets, 3,956 rests, 5,580 pikes, and 2,331 corselets[5]. The most complete list we have for supplying a single unit is for Colonel Langham's Regiment, with:

Equipment Supplied to Langham's Regiment.

711 Muskets
703 Rests
701 Bandoliers
538 Swords
466 Belts
366 Corselets
358 Headpieces
374 Pikes [6]

The headpieces mentioned would have been open morions of a variety of designs, and the corselets were back and breastplates of a longer variety than that worn by cavalrymen. Many early war corselets included tassets which were extensions that protected the groin and upper thighs. Some members of the London Trained Bands wore buff coats, but this was not usual in other infantry units. On 10 December 1642, £720 was paid for 800 muskets and rests for Colonel Holmstead's regiment, along with £80 for colours, drums, halberds and partisans. As the war progressed, the issue of foot armour ceased, and the number of pikes reduced as more and more muskets were procured.

Combat during the seventeenth century was a much more personal thing compared to the age of the long range firearm or the computer-game similarity of modern warfare. Drill Manuals and treatises on the '*Art Militaire*' were forging a science of mutual bloodletting and despite the need for able bodied men to handle the puissant pike, gunpowder had revolutionized war in that a half-starved conscript could point a musket and pull a trigger. Moreover the pike was hardly a skilful weapon. Both the pike and the musket were

5 T.N.A. SP 28/261/411.
6 T.N.A. SP 28/11/40.

the arms of the unified mass – what they lacked in quality they made up for in quantity.

Since he had seen military service on the continent with the Dutch, Essex had his army modelled along the lines of the best practice of their army, and there were plenty of printed military manuals available for novice officers and NCOs to use, but sensibly the lord general ordered his officers not to practise their men in ceremonial drills but to instruct only what was necessary to fight,

> … to be careful in the exercising of your men, and bring them to use their arms readily and expertly, and not to busy them in practising the ceremonious forms of military discipline; only let them be well instructed in the necessary rudiments of war.[7]

That is, to fall on with discretion, retreat with care, and maintain their order, and make good their ground. The Dutch system for fighting a regiment was to array the men in ranks six or more deep, with the pike in the centre of the body, flanked by two wings of musketeers. The musketeers would fire by rank, after discharging their pieces each rank would arc around to the rear to reload, thus keeping up continuous fire when required. This procedure could be carried out with the unit standing its ground, advancing or withdrawing. The central 'stand of pike' would guard the colours and provide a mobile defence to protect the regiment against the charge of enemy cavalry. The pikemen were also employed to spearhead assaults on enemy foot regiments (coming to 'push of pike' as it was called), with the musketeers using their muskets as clubs, covering their flanks.

As most regiments were under strength, they would be brigaded temporarily with other units once arrayed upon a battlefield, and would be commanded by an appointed brigade major. These arrangements would be made at the beginning of a campaign and a plan drawn up for the army's deployment which was flexible enough to be adaptable to fit most battlefield situations.

Pikeman's gorget or collar (Stow on the Wold) photo Nicola Turton

English Pikeman's morion (Exeter Museum). (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

English Pikeman's morion (Taunton Museum). (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

7 Davies, G., 'The Parliamentary Army under the Earl of Essex' in *English Historical Review* (Oxford, 1934), XLIX, pp. 35-6 quoting from *The Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England* (24 vols, London, 1751-1761), XI, pp. 436-9.

On the march and upon the battlefield the orders of the brigade or regiment's senior officer were transmitted by the drum. There were six different beats of the drum which the soldier was required to learn.

The Calls of War

1. The Call, to listen out for orders or assemble by their colours.
2. The Troop, to shoulder muskets or advance pikes, close ranks or files to order, and then follow their officer.
3. March, open order in rank, shoulder arms and march, quicker or slower to the beat of the drum.
4. The Preparative, close for skirmish in both rank and file and make ready.
5. The Battaile, to charge the enemy.
6. The Retreat, to retire backward, either for relief, to take advantage of the ground, or to entice the enemy into an ambush.

Of the colours that Essex's first army marched under, little is known for certain. The Royalists claimed to have taken a number of colours at Edgehill including all of Colonel Charles Essex's and most of Lord Walton's. Some of these ensigns may be those that appear in William Dobson's study of Prince Charles, which was painted shortly after the battle. Four ensigns are shown, stacked at the Prince's feet, one red, one white, one orange and one blue. These colours are shown furled with no devices visible. Strings and tassels are shown attached to the blue and red ensigns in matching colours; the other two have none. Three of the colour poles are tipped with lozenge pike heads whilst the red has a pierced open work of brass – somewhat like a leading staff.

Only two Parliamentarian infantry colours are known to survive, one of Colonel John Gell's regiment from the midlands, and the other possibly one of Sir Alexander Carew's regiment from the south west. Neither of these units served with Essex, but they give a good idea of the type of ensign carried at the time by a captain's company of foot. In size, the yellow Carew colour is 79" wide by 69" high with a white canton 21" square sewn into the top of the pole side, onto which is sewn the red cross of St George. On the field of the colour are painted distinctions of four black lions passant which suggest that this is the seventh senior company of the regiment. The colonel's colour would have been plain, the lieutenant colonel's with a canton alone, the sergeant major's with a canton and a streamer, or wave extending out into the field, whilst the other captains had cantons plus increasing numbers of devices of distinction. For the reserve army, we have one detailed payment for £40 for Colonel Holborne's regiment, ' … for ten ensigns made each of yellow taffetie with distinctions of tawney in Starrs … '[8]

After the first Battle of Newbury, the royalists claimed to have taken four orange colours, with white stars and another with a white wavy, and at the surrender of Lostwithiel, Captain Symonds recorded seeing ' … Colonel Aldridge, blew colours with lions rampant or … Colonel Conyngham, green

8 T.N.A. SP 28/3/77.

colours [and] Colonel Davis, white colours … '[9] This last flag was probably that of Colonel William Davis who had taken command of Holborne's old regiment. The final and most complete list of colours we have for Essex's regiments is that for the refit following the army's return from Cornwall. In October 1644, an order was placed with Alexander Venner to make the following:

Colours Manufactured for the Portsmouth Refit

Seven orange colours with white mullets made of Florence Sarsnet
Eight crimson "in graine florence" with yellow mullets
Eight green with yellow billets
Eight crimson with white balls
Eight green with yellow half moons
Eight green with white diamonds
And for repairing five existing ensigns

These colours were received in November 1644 but there is no information regarding which regiments received which colours although it would seem probable that the seven orange colours and the five repaired were for the twelve companies of the Lord General's Regiment.[10] Aldrich's regiment initially missed out on this issue, but was later equipped with ensigns, ' … of blew florence sarsnet with distinctions of gould culler laurels and tassels.'[11] These blue ensigns were the ones which were taken by Aldrich with his regiment into the New Model Army in spring 1645. They were some of the survivors of that 'perfect infantry' in which Robert Devereux himself had proudly fought with in the front rank in some of the greatest battles of the First Civil War.

To conclude this appendix on the Foot, these are regimental strengths taken from Pay Warrants surviving in The National Archive. They are the numbers of the private soldiers only and do not include officers, NCOs or drummers. It is an amended and enlarged version of a list first published in 1987.[12]

9 Peachey, S., (ed), *Richard Symonds, The Complete Military Diary* (Partizan Press, 1989) p.25.
10 T.N.A. SP 28/19/2/174
11 T.N.A. SP 28/21/220
12 Peachey, S., and Turton, A., *Old Robin's Foot* (Partizan Press, 1987)

Table A.I.3: Regimental Strengths from Enlistment Target to Disbandment or Transfer

Regiment	Proposed	Oct 1642	Nov-Dec 1642	Jan-Mar 1643	11 Apr 1643	21 Jun 1643	Jul-Aug 1643	Oct 1643	Dec 1643	Apr 1644	24 Jun 1644	27 Dec 1644
Lord General	1,500	958	700	?	?	?	726	816	553	698	1,292	643
Hampden /Tyrrell /Ingoldsby	1,200	963	?	748	?	?	450	329	127	297	524	226
Holles	1,200	1,130	?	Regiment no longer in existence								
Lord Stamford	1,200	778	Regiment no longer part of Essex's army									
Earl of Peterborough	800	(700)	?	?	?	Regiment no longer in existence						
Lord Rochford	800	710	?	?	316	Regiment no longer in existence						
Charles Essex	800	(600)	Regiment no longer in existence									
Ballard/Martin	800	776	439	423	?	275	250	253	85	80	Regiment no longer part of Essex's army	
Grantham	800	?	?	?	Regiment no longer in existence							
Constable	800	(700)	450	?	522	467	365	308	142	216	Regiment no longer in existence	
Lord Saye and Seale /Meldrum /Aldrich	800	(799)	400	478	?	458	358	324	?	?	300	200
Lord Robartes	800	(500)	?	456	723	393	365	310	188	363	(700)	333
Lord Brooke	800	(740)	480	Regiment no longer in existence								
Lord St John /Thomas Essex	800	?	Not part of Essex's army				Regiment no longer in existence					
Lord Mandeville	800	(479)	139+	Regiment no longer part of Essex's army								
Lord Wharton	800	(600)	244	Regiment no longer in existence								
Sir William Fairfax	800	(750)	Regiment no longer in existence									
Sir Henry Chomley	1,200	1,128	552	529	Regiment no longer in existence							
Sir John Merrick	1,200	(950)	Regiment no longer part of Essex's army						Regiment no longer in existence			
Philip Skippon	1,500	*	946	?	1,033	657	516	518	161	258	(540)	295
Bulstrode /Cunningham /Fortescue	800	*	669	?	613	555	376	310	110	233	634	377
John Holmstead	1,200	*	1,000	?	?	462	416	331	89	Regiment no longer in existence		
Harry Barclay	1,200	*	900	?	?	636	496	391	138	?	475	282
Holborne /William Davis	1,200	*	?	660	?	777	290	249	111	196	(316)	173
Langham /George Carleton	1,200	*	688	?	908	548	431	268	80	148	Regiment no longer in existence	
Francis Thompson	1,200	*	*	*	*	?	351	238	81	139	Regiment no longer part of Essex's army	

( ) denotes reconstructed muster from various warrants * denotes regiment not yet formed

Appendix II

The Horse

The mounted forces of Essex's army were also subdivided into two distinct groups. In the first group the most prevalent were the quasi-heavy cavalry who, usually wearing some form of armour, were somewhat contradictorily styled 'light horse'. The rest of this group, called cuirassiers, were indeed heavy horse and wore three-quarter armour. The second group were not really cavalry, but mounted infantry; called dragoons, this arm will be dealt with in the next appendix.

Writing in 1661, J.B., the author of a book of instructions for the cavalry stated that the Horse were,

> The chief Strength of the Army … in these modern times.[1]

Yet in England in 1642 the only regular unit of Horse was the seven troop regiment of Lord Wharton, which was being raised for service against the Irish rebels. Essex managed to get at least four of these troops transferred directly in his new army, although at Edgehill one troop, Sir Faithfull Fortescue's, deserted en-block to the enemy. As described in Chapter 2, the new force began to build up in London from mid-June onwards.

The basic unit of the Horse was the troop and each troop usually consisted of a captain, a lieutenant, a cornet and a quartermaster, besides two trumpeters, three corporals, a saddler, and a farrier, plus the ordinary troopers. Raised by leading figures at the start of the war, several of these troops were first grouped into *ad hoc* regiments under the command of a man of rank. Over time some of these units became semi-permanent whilst others were broken up and regularly redistributed. At times one or more troops were detached from their parent regiment for duty elsewhere and gradually their officer might acquire more troops under his command until he formed his own regiment. The troop captains whose units formed the Earl of Essex's Regiment of Horse at Edgehill virtually all went on to form their own regiments later in the wars.

Initially there seems to have been no specific directions laid down for the number of cavalry troops for each regiment. The order of 23 September 1642

1 J.B., *Some Brief Instructions for the Exercising of the Cavalry, or Horse – Troopes*, (London, 1661), p.3.

Cavalry in action from a c.1640 engraving by S. Della-Bella. (Turton Collection)

for all units to leave London and join with the main army does not refer to regiments and only states the minimum muster for individual troops as 40 men. However by the spring of 1643, the regiments were put on a far more regular basis, most containing about six troops. The ordinance of 26 March 1644 for the reorganisation of Essex's army included the instruction that the Horse should consist of 3,000 men, placed in six regiments, which in turn were to be divided into six troops, the colonel's troop to have 100 troopers besides officers, and each of the five captains' troops of 80 troopers besides officers. Although attempts were made to comply with this ordinance, right up to the disbanding of the army, some regiments appear to have contained more troops than others, and the numbers in a troop varied too.

Much of what is known about the composition of the Horse is drawn from pay warrants.

Table A.II.1: The establishment and pay for the Horse

Pay for the Day			
Officers General of the Horse	**£**	**s**	**d**
General of the Horse	5	00	00
Lieutenant General	2	00	00
Quarter Master General of the Horse	0	10	00
Two Horse Carabynes	0	05	00
Commissary for the Provisions	0	10	00
Plus four men and horses allowed him at 2/6- each	0	10	00
Provo Marshall	0	5	00
Plus eight horse carabynes at 2/6- each	1	00	00
Muster Master General	0	15	00
Two Deputies at 5/- each	0	10	00
A Preacher	0	08	00
A Chirugeon	0	04	00
Two mates	0	05	00

A Troop of Cuirassiers			
Captain	1	04	00
Plus six horses at 3/6-	1	01	00
Lieutenant	0	08	00
Plus four horses at 3/6-	0	14	00
Cornet	0	06	00
Plus three horses at 3/6-	0	10	06
Quarter Master	0	04	00
Plus two horses at 3/6-	0	07	00
Three Corporals at 4/-	0	12	00
Three Trumpets at 3/6-	0	10	06
One Sadler	0	03	06
One Smith	0	03	06
80 Cuirassiers at 3/6-	14	00	00
A Troop of Horse			
Captain	1	04	00
Plus six horses at 2/6-	0	15	00
Lieutenant	0	08	00
Plus four horses at 2/6-	0	10	00
Cornet	0	06	00
Plus three horses at 2/6-	0	07	06
Quarter Master	0	04	00
Plus two horses at 2/6-	0	05	00
Three Corporals at 3/- each	0	09	00
Two Trumpeters at 3/- each	0	06	00
One Sadler	0	02	06
One Smith	0	02	00
Sixty Harquebusiers at 2/6- each	7	10	00
Colonel of Horse [in addition to his pay as captain]	1	10	00
Major of Horse [in addition to his pay as captain]	1	02	00

Source: Drawn mostly from SP 28/140/part4/17.

Besides his normal pay an officer, or NCO, upon his 'entertainment' [enlistment], received a lump sum known as an Advance or Mounting Money, this was to cover the cost of equipment for himself and his horse

Table A. II.2: Other Payments to Officers

Advance Money

	£	s	d
Captain	140	00	00
Lieutenant	60	00	00
Cornet	50	00	00
Quarter Master	30	00	00
Three Corporals	42	00	00
Two Trumpeters	16	00	00
Farrier	08	00	00
Saddler	08	00	00

At the start of the war money was also allotted for the provision of transport wagons for the Horse, but this was soon changed and all baggage for the cavalry was to be carried on sumpter horses. Whether these were the responsibility of the individual troopers or a troop or indeed a regimental matter is uncertain.

The proportion of Horse to Foot in Essex's Army varied and depended very much on what finances and number of animals were available. In most of Western Europe, the cavalry were made up of three distinct types: lancers, cuirassiers and harquebusiers, ideally in the ratio of 1:2:1. However in the English armies of the civil wars, only the last two types were employed.[2] Of the cuirassiers only three troops were raised for Essex's army, the Lord General Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex's Lifeguard of Horse of 100 men, General of Horse William Russell, Earl of Bedford's Lifeguard of 100 men and Lieutenant General of Horse Sir William Balfour's Troop of 80 men.[3] The lord general's horsemen were styled cuirassiers throughout the war, whereas the men of the other two units by 1644 were listed as purely troopers. One reason for the limited number of cuirassiers fielded by both sides in the war was the lack of the 'Great' or 'English Black Horses' to carry them. In the 1540s, Henry VIII had passed a number of laws to promote the breeding of these large warhorses but over the century these laws had been neglected by the gentry in favour of breeding race horses. A powerful horse was needed to carry the great weight of a fully equipped cuirassier.[4] According to one royalist source:

> The Armes of Horse, Cuirassiers, are, Gorget, Curats, Cutases, Poldrons, Vambraces, a left hand Gauntlet, Taces Cuisses, a Cask, a Sword, Girdle and Hangers, a case of Pistolls, Firelocks, Saddle, Bridle, Bit, Peterell, Crooper, with the leathers belonging to fasten his Pistolls, and his necessary sack of carriage … [5]

2 Lances were used in Scots armies, especially by units raised among the border reivers. Unlike on the continent where lancers were armoured heavy cavalry Scots lancers were light horse.

3 Haselrig's famous 'lobsters' were not part of Essex's army.

4 The Morgan tends to be the nearest among modern breeding stock.

5 National Army Museum 7506-22, *Military Orders and Articles established by his Majestie* (printed 1643).

The three quarter armours with their closed helmets were made to be pistol proof and so were of considerable weight, and required a high degree of fitness to wear. It is no wonder that Sir Edmund Verney, the king's standard bearer remarked, 'It will kill a man to serve in a whole cuirass'.[6] The cost of a suit ranged from between 54/- and 80/- depending on quality.

Wheel-lock cavalry pistols (Cotehele House). (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

The majority of Essex's cavalry were harquebusiers who, quoting again from Military Orders,

> … hath succeeded in the place of Light – horsemen (and are indeed of singular use almost in all actions of war) the Armes are a good Hargobus, or Dragon, fitted with Iron work, to be carryed in a Belt, a Belt with a flaske, Priming – Box, Key, and Bullet – bag, an open Head – piece, with cheeks, a good Buff – coat with deep skirts, Sword Girdle and Hangers, a Sadle, Bridle, Bit, Peterell, Crooper with straps for his Sack of necessaries, and Horse of lesse force and lesse price than the Cuirassier.[7]

Cavalry pistol holster (Montgomery Old Bell Museum). (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

Drill manuals of the period describe how Horse should fire carbines and then pistols so as to disorder their enemy formation before going in with the sword. Carbines were short muskets usually fired by use of English locks or even wheel-locks. Although some did have them after the early campaign, most of Essex's troopers did not carry a carbine but were issued with a pair of pistols. Despite cavalrymen being deemed socially superior to the infantry the pistol was not thought of as a gentleman's weapon of choice although Prince Rupert who was known to be interested in them, owned a pair of rifled pistols whose accuracy he supposedly demonstrated to his royal uncle by twice hitting a church weathervane.[8] Tests made in 1620 with standard wheel-locks recorded an eighty-five percent success rate for hitting a man-sized target at thirty yards plus reasonable rates of penetration of 2mm steel plate.[9] However, probably the best piece of advice given to troopers regarding using their pistols was from Rupert who advocated that mounted men should 'receive the Enemy's Shot, without firing either Carbin or Pistol,

6 Quoted in Firth, C.H., *Cromwell's Army* (London: Methuen, 1962) p.113.
7 National Army Museum 7506-22, Military Orders and Articles established by his Majestie (printed 1643).
8 Akehurst, R., *The World of Guns* (London: Hamlyn, 1972. p. 16.
9 Honeywell, C., & Spear, G,, 'The English Civil War', *Europa Militaria No.4* (London: Windrowe & Greene, 1993), p.38.

til we broke in amongst the Enemy, and then to make use of our Fire-arms as need should require'.[10] In other words, do not fire until you can see the whites of their eyes.

Pistols were carried in leather holsters mounted on either side of the saddle bow, which had roll-down caps or covers to prevent damp reaching the pistol. 'English lock' pistols were mostly favoured by Parliament's suppliers, as they commanded the London manufacturers, although wheel-locks were purchased from aboard in the early stages of the war. A spanner or key was required to wind up the mechanism of the wheel-lock and this was either worn about the neck on a cord, or attached to the holster. Firestones or flints were needed to fire the English locks, and large quantities were purchased and distributed. The cost of a pair of pistols varied enormously but the average seems to have been about £2. To complete his equipment, a trooper carried a powder flask of horn and a bullet bag, either possibly carried on the pistol holster or slung around the body. Where carbines were provided they cost about 25/- and were attached to a girdle by a metal swivel, with the whole assembly being worn over the left shoulder.

The parliamentarian Horse was also issued with back and breast plates. This armour, along with a helmet cost around £2. There were two main types of helmet worn by harquebusiers; the 'English Pot', and the 'Dutch Pot'. The English type could have had a skull forged in two halves, joined by a central comb, or could be beaten from a single piece. They had a neck guard and a pivoted peaked visor on which were mounted three interlocking face bars. The skull of the imported Dutch helmet however was usually beaten from a single sheet of metal, had a fixed peak through which a single nasal bar passed and a neck guard made of articulated plates.

To protect their bodies from sword cuts, most parliamentarians who could afford them wore thick leather coats. Called 'buff coats', they seem to have been purchased by the men themselves. The cost of an ordinary buff coat, made of ox hide, was around 30 shillings, but despite this expense, they were so widespread amongst the cavalry that 'buff coat' became the common name for a trooper. All troopers wore a sword, the basket hilted being particularly popular but by no means the only type carried. Parliament commissioned vast numbers of cheap unbalanced hacking short swords with a rudimentary hand guard, called hangers or tucks, for most of the Foot, but the Horse also carried something similar. The longer version of hangers made in the Hounslow factory also seem to have been issued in large numbers to the cavalry. Horsemen's swords cost between 7/6d and 10/- and were carried by means of a leather over-shoulder strap or baldrick or slung from a waist girdle costing 1/6d. These 'mortuary swords', being slightly longer, were useful for both cutting and thrusting and its guard gave better protection to the user's hand. Longer still and much more efficiently balanced was the more expensive 'Pappenheimer', a German design rapier carried by many of the 'foreign-service' men. These were far more useful and practical than the cheaper issues. Cheap swords were notoriously weighty, blade-heavy, clumsy and difficult to use. The idea of a trooper placing the point just to the side

10 Bulstrode, R., *Memoirs and Reflections* (London, 1721).

of a cuirass and thrusting in under the armpit as opposing lines met was most likely an elusive dream.

Whether lines of horses moved into each other at a good round trot or met with a crash of horseflesh, both types of engagement were followed by a protracted bashing match as the men used the chop and hack of the blade coupled with the guard-punch. Their target was more often than not their enemy's mount which, if felled, took its rider out of the fray as well. The swords used by the Horse could cut, if sharpened proficiently, but their design was nowhere near as good as that of the extremely effective light cavalry sabre of later eras. Consequently they were not good for slicing down fleeing infantry.

The poleaxe was a favourite cavalry weapon early in the war and its effective use features in several accounts of Edgehill. As well as a cutting edge it usually had a hammer head for crushing and a spike for thrusting which made it a very useful all round weapon. For a skilled smith, it was not difficult to produce; it just took time and was consequently more expensive. These weapons were not issued, but were personal possessions brought from a private arsenal, or were specially commissioned by the owner for 'going to the wars'.

Cavalry Armour and Buff Coat (Hartlebury Castle Museum). (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

The only item of clothing issued by Parliament to Essex's troopers was their tawny orange scarves or sashes which showed them to be part of the Lord General's Army. Ten shillings had been allocated for each of these scarves in 1642, making them a more expensive item than a foot soldier's coat which at the time cost about 9/6d. The trumpeters of a Horse troop were singled out by the amount of money lavished on their clothing and equipment by their captains, the reason for this being that their duties partly included dealing directly with the enemy, very much in the tradition of the mediaeval herald. Colonel Harvey of the City of London Horse which was attached to Essex's Army on several campaigns, paid out in June 1643, £7/10/8d for, 'Clothing, boots, spurs and a hat for a trumpeter.'[11]

A trumpeter's normal duty was to transmit the orders of their captain to the rest of the troop by a series of trumpet calls:

1. Put on their saddles (Butte Sella)
2. Mount (Monte Cavallo)
3. Repair to their colours
4. March (Tucquet)
5. Charge (Carga, Carga)
6. Retire to their colours (Ala Standardo)
7. Prepare to go on guard (Auquet)

11 T.N.A. SP 28/147.

The junior officer of a troop carried the unit's cornet (standard) after which his rank was named. Cavalry standards differed greatly from the colours of the Foot, being approximately 24inches square and were far more individual in style. We are fortunate in that a number of contemporary illustrative sources survive to give us a reasonable amount of information on the standards carried by Essex's cavalry, particularly for the early part of the war. Each troop carried an individual standard usually with some kind of political cartoon or motto, and it is difficult to see how they fitted into the regimental structure. It would appear that troops in the same regiment often carried cornets with matching fields and parti-coloured fringes although this was not always the case. It is doubtful that when a troop changed from one regiment to another, quite a common practice in Essex's Horse, that it changed its cornet colour to match its new formation and it was only the change in captain that would bring this about. For instance, in March 1643 Captain Adam Baynard upon being commissioned to take over the troop of Captain Alexander of Goodwin's Regiment bought new trumpet banners and a standard costing him £17.[12] Trumpet banners were suspended beneath the trumpets themselves and from the few surviving illustrations, they were not copies of the troop's cornet, but were far more heraldic in nature, containing devices from the captain's family arms.

The design of cornets varied tremendously although the more senior an officer was the plainer his cornet tended to be. Those carried by officers attached to a general were of one colour and made of damasked silk whilst a colonel's troop mostly carried a plain taffeta or silk cornet in a regimental hue. There seems to have been no general rank indication for majors or the various captains in the parliamentarian Horse; their cornets were mostly quite individual and featured a wide variety of painted designs.

The standard or cornet was usually mounted with a tasselled cord upon a medieval-styled tapered lance with a metal side staple for attachment to the carbine girdle-like belt worn by the carrying officer. One possible surviving standard of Essex's cavalry, which was, according to tradition, lost at the First Battle of Newbury, is now in a private collection. Originally this silk damasked cornet was pale green or blue in colour upon which on both sides, is painted in gold and brown, a foliated banner bearing the motto "Constanter Et Fideliter", in black. It measures 59cm by 52.5cm, is lacking a fringe and is damaged on the pole side. To whom it originally belonged is a mystery, and it breaks convention by having a painted emblem upon a damasked cloth. To lose a troop's cornet to the enemy was deemed a great disgrace and emphasis was put upon its defence. In action it was placed in the middle of the troop with the best armed troopers surrounding it. The royalists claimed to have captured up to 70 cornets and colours at Edgehill, but in the following years, Essex's cavalry became a force with which to be reckoned, and the capture of one of its cornets, a rarity.

On the text-book battlefield, it was the job of the Horse to cover both flanks of the main infantry formation, which formed the centre of the army. At the beginning of the war, as with the infantry, the cavalry was trained in the Dutch system of deployment, and operated more like mobile fire

12 T.N.A. SP. 28/33/483.

platforms. This placed great emphasis on deep formations and the use of firearms to break enemy attacking forces or conversely, to attack rank after rank performing the caracole in a gradual wearing down of the enemy's order and morale. The parliamentarian Horse in the actions of the early war was taken completely by surprise by the non-stop charge to contact of Rupert's cavalry who relied not on fire arms, but on speed and cold steel to break them. However they learnt from their mistakes and by the second year, had adapted their tactics to counter the royalists as demonstrated at Chalgrove, where although they suffered a defeat, they amazed their enemies by their resilience. They continued to demonstrate their prowess in the Gloucester and Newbury campaigns.

Essex was always more at home with his Foot than with the Horse, but he always chose excellent senior officers to command them. Despite various absences due to ill health, Sir William Balfour served the lord general remarkably well, as did the young Yorkshireman, Sir Phillip Stapleton, commander of Essex's Life Guard, who became Lieutenant General of Horse when Balfour was promoted to General following the short-lived defection of the Earl of Bedford to the king in 1643.

Over 130 captains of Horse served at different times under Essex during his lord generalship, in a total of 15 different cavalry regiments, some of which lasted until the reduction of his army, others only a few months.

Table A.II.3: Regiments of Horse of Essex's Army 1642-45.

	1642				1643				1644				1645			
Lord General Robert Devereux Earl of Essex			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Lieutenant General of Horse Sir William Balfour			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Commissary General Sir James Ramsey			■	?												
Commissary General Hans Behre							■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Quarter Master of Horse John Dalbier						■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Colonel Arthur Goodwin			■	■	■	■	■	■	■							
Colonel Edwin Sands			■													
Colonel James Sheffield							■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Colonel Bazil Lord Fielding			■													
Colonel John Urry				■	■											
Colonel John Middleton				■	■	■	■	■	■							
Colonel Lord Willoughby of Parham				■	■											
Colonel John Meldrum						■	■	■	■							
Colonel Sir Robert Pye										■	■	■	■			
Colonel Sir William Waller			■	■	■	■										

At the formation of the New Model Army in spring 1645, the former regiments of Dalbier and Behre were sent into the West Country to become part of Sergeant Major General Massey's brigade. All the troopers of the other four surviving regiments were consolidated into three new units in

Fairfax's army under Colonel Richard Greaves (formerly Lieutenant Colonel of Essex's own Regiment of Horse), Colonel Sir Robert Pye, and Colonel Thomas Sheffield (formerly a captain in the regiment of his brother Colonel James Sheffield).

Because of the mobility of the Horse, Essex's cavalry tended to see more action than the infantry and take the field earlier in the campaigning season. Below is a list of some of the engagements in which they were involved.

Table A.II.4: Actions in which Essex's Cavalry were involved.

Date		Action	Officers Commanding the Horse
Year	Date		
1642	6 August	Siege of Portsmouth	Sir William Waller
	2 September	Siege of Sherborne Castle	Earl of Bedford
	7 September	Babylon Hill, Yeovil	Earl of Bedford
	12 September	Taking of Oxford	Colonel Goodwin / Colonel Brown
	23 September	Powick Bridge	Colonel Brown / Colonel Edwin Sandys
	23 October	Battle of Edgehill	Earl of Bedford
	12 November	Battle of Brentford	Captain Robert Vivers
	13 November	Turnham Green	Sir William Balfour
	13 December	Capture of Winchester	Sir William Waller
1643	23 April	Raid on Dorchester on Thames	Colonels Middleton and Meldrum
	18 June	South Weston	Sergeant Major Gunter
	18 June	Chalgrove Field	Colonel John Hampden
	31 August	Bicester	Captain Robert Hammond
	4 September	Stow-on-the-Wold	Commissary General Sir James Ramsey
	6 September	Cheltenham	Colonel John Dalbier
	7 September	Winchcombe	Sergeant Major Boza
	16 September	Capture of Cirencester	Sergeant Major Robert Hammond
	18 September	Aldbourne Chase	Acting General of Horse, Sir Philip Stapleton
	20 September	1st Battle of Newbury	Stapleton / Ramsey

1644	29 March	Battle of Cheriton	General Sir William Balfour
	30 March	Capture of Winchester	General Sir William Balfour
	June	Oxford Campaign	General Sir William Balfour
	15 June	Relief of Lyme Regis	General Sir William Balfour
	17 June	Capture of Weymouth	General Sir William Balfour
	July	Relief of Plymouth	General Sir William Balfour
	21 August	Battle of Beacon Hill	General Sir William Balfour
	30-31 August	Break-out from Lostwithiel	Balfour / Behre
	27 October	2nd Battle of Newbury	General Sir William Balfour
1645	April	Reduction of Essex's Cavalry	

According to Malcolm Wanklyn in his discussion of the New Model being a national army, 'in the cavalry regiments in particular there remained a core of troopers alive in 1649 who had belonged to the pre-New Model Army regiments'.[13] Among these stalwarts would have been many veterans of the Earl of Essex's Horse.

13 Wanklyn, M., *Reconstructing the New Model Army* (Solihull, Helion & Company, 2015), vol..I. p.30.

Appendix III

The Dragoons

The Dragoons were mounted infantry who rode rather than walked to the battlefield. There they dismounted, tethered their horses and fought on foot. If they came under pressure or were threatened by something with which they could not cope, they fell back to their horses, remounted and rode away to safety. As cavalry however, although they usually carried swords, they were not melee troops but rather undertook patrols and scouting duties. As a more mobile fire force they were particularly useful in holding objectives such as bridges or fortified buildings during advances and covering retreats. They were also very useful in working through woodland or lining hedgerows from where they could fire into the flanks of enemy formations. Writing in 1616 in *The Military Art Mounted,* the professional soldier Captain Jean Jacques Wallhausen stated of the dragoon that they were,

> … a very convenient, appropriate and useful part of the cavalry,

and that they were,

> … devised so that the infantry or a portion of it mounted on horse (since there are a number of deeds which cannot be accomplished by cavalry alone), may promptly and rapidly come to the aid of the cavalry.[1]

Essex initially raised two regiments of dragoons, Browne's and Wardlaw's, as part of his first field army, and both were predominantly officered by Scots.

Table A.III.1: The Establishment and Pay for a Regiment of Dragoons in 1642.

Rank	Daily Pay	Mounting Money per Day
Colonel	£1.10s.00d	£0.05s.00d
Sergeant Major	£0.09s.00d	£0.05s.00d
Quartermaster	£0.05s.00d	
Preacher	£0.04s.00d	

1 Pearse, R., The Use Of The Matchlock When Mounted *Journal of the Society of Historical Research,* Vol XLIV, p 203.

Provost Marshall	£0.05s.00d	
Surgeon	£0.04s.00d	
Surgeon's Mates x2	£0.02s.06d each	
Captain	£0.15s.00d	£0.05s.00d
Lieutenant	£0.04s.00d	£0.03s.00d
Cornet	£0.03s.00d	£0.02s.00d
Sergeants x2	£0.01s.06d each	£0.01s.00d each
Corporals x3	£0.01s.00d each	£0.01s.00d each
Drummers x2	£0.01s.00d each	£0.01s.00d each
Smith	£0.01s.00d	£0.01s.00d
600 dragoons	£0.01s.06d each	

Source: T.N.A. S.P. 28/140/part 17.

It is interesting to note that both the preacher and the blacksmith were on the strength.

Raised in 1642, the first regiment of dragoons in Essex's first army was that of Colonel John Browne.

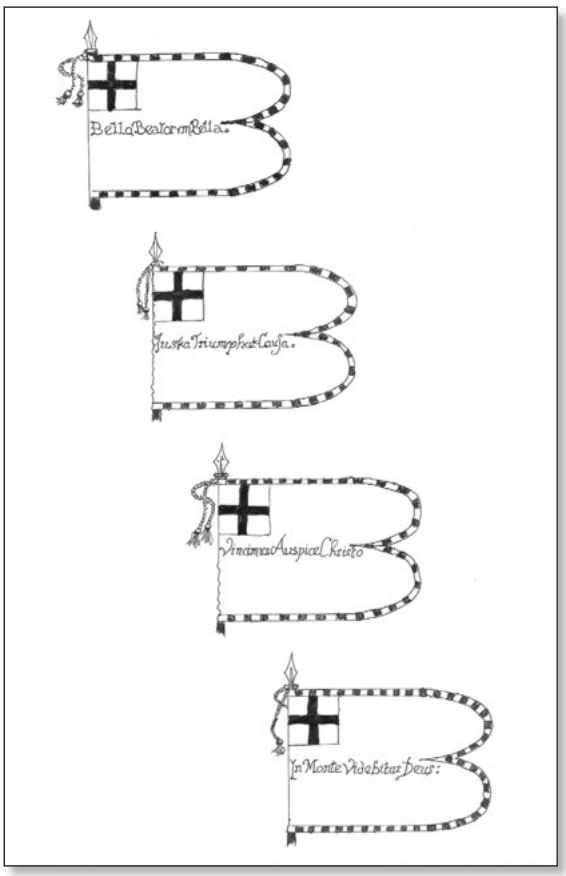
Table A.III.2: Colonel Browne's Regiment of Dragoons.

Company Commander	First Pay Warrant Issued	Numbers Excluding Officers	Remarks
Colonels Company under Captain Lieutenant John Carrs	25 August 1642	94	
Sergeant Major Nathanial Gordon	27 August 1642	96	Gordon left the service 1 October 1642, replaced by Gilbert Blair
Sir John Browne	25 August 1642	100	
Robert Mewer	27 August 1642	81	
William Buchan	30 September 1642	91	
Robert Maine	27 August 1642	75	
Sir Anthony Irby			Originally listed with Browne but does not seem to have served

Source: Drawn from The National Archives (TNA) SP 28.

Browne's quartermaster was John Blackman and his provost marshall was Daniel Lyon. The regiment received £40 for its colours and drums on 19 August 1642.[2] Browne was granted pay for his 600 men on 19 August 1642[3], and a week later he received 600 short muskets to arm them.[4] Colonel Browne, with part of his regiment, was involved with the action at Powick Bridge where he was mortally wounded. Despite this, the regiment kept

2 T.N.A. SP 28/1/164.
3 T.N.A. SP 28/261/43.
4 T.N.A. SP WO 55/1937.



Guidons of Colonel Wardlawe's Dragoons. Source: Alan Turton

up its numbers and served at Edgehill, but was disbanded by the following spring.

Wallhausen recommended that dragoon muskets had a sling of leather attached to the stock, top and bottom, in order to hang the weapon from the soldier's back whilst riding. He also suggested that their horses be the smallest and cheapest possible so that when the dragoon was fighting on foot its loss would be less great should he be unable to return to it. In his *Militarie Instructions for the CAVALL'RIE* John Cruso says that when alighted from their horses the dragoons,

> … every of them is to cast his bridle over the neck of his side-man's horse, in the same order as they marched: Keeping them so together, by the help of such as thereunto especially appointed.[5]

Wallhausen suggests that the dragoon should ' … not be equipped with boots or spurs, for they would do more harm than good if he has to dismount'.[6] In fact there appear to be no surviving warrants for the supply of footwear or indeed clothing to any of Essex's dragoons

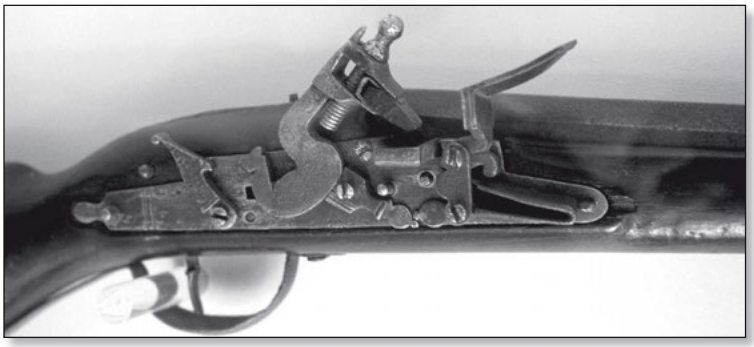
James Wardlaw was the colonel of Essex's second regiment of dragoons and by 23 September 1642 it was listed as consisting of 600 dragoons, 12 sergeants, 23 corporals and 22 drummers.[7] The company commanders were Colonel James Wardlaw (his company under the command of Lieutenant George Dundass), Captain Alexander Nerne (possibly the same Captain Nerne who listed to serve as captain of horse for the Irish Expedition on 5 July 1642), Captain John Barne, Captain James Stenchion, Captain George Forbes, and possibly Captain Archibald Hambleton. On 16 September 1642 a warrant was issued to supply the unit with 600 muskets, 600 swords with belts, 600 bandoliers, 2,000 lb of powder and shot proportional.[8] That no match was issued suggests that the firearms which were delivered to Captain Nerne on 19 September and referred to as 'bastard muskets' were in fact firelocks.[9]

Dragoons carried guidons, which were more akin in size to cavalry cornets, although rather than being rectangular the fly ended in a rounded swallow tail. Each company had its own guidon which were usually of a consistent regimental colour and distinguished in the same way as the Foot

5 Cruso, J., *Militarie Instruction for the CAVALL'RIE* (Kineton, The Roundwood Press, 1972), p. 44. The thick, stiff, heavy trooper's boots as seen in the Northampton Shoe Museum would be almost impossible for quick, agile movement.
6 Pearse, R., op.cit., p.203.
7 T.N.A. SP 28/2B/438.
8 T.N.A. SP. WO 55/1754.
9 T.N.A. WO 55/1937.

with cantons and rank-related devices or , as in the case of Wardlawe's, with mottos .

Wardlaw's Regiment saw action at Edgehill and by early December 1642 it was mustering 6 captains, 6 lieutenants, 6 cornets, 12 sergeants, 18 corporals and 5 drummers but only 210 dragoons.[10] By the beginning of 1643 the regiment had been reduced, but one company of 120 men under George Dundass was retained to serve with the Lord General's Regiment of Horse. [11]



English Dog Lock or Fire Lock Musket (Basing House). (Photograph by Nicola Turton)

During his occupation of Worcester in September/October 1642, Essex had decided to increase his mobile force by raising two more regiments of dragoons which, however, were to be short lived. The first was put under Lord Brooke who by 6 October had 370 men listed[12] and was given £100 towards buying horses[13] and on 10 October, £150 for 300 saddles.[14] This is the last we hear of this unit in connection with Essex's army; it may have been stood down for lack of horses or absorbed into local Midland forces.

The second 'Worcester' unit certainly took the field and consisted mostly of the three existing companies of firelocks drawn from the Lord General's Regiment of Foot. They were placed under the command of Scotsman Colonel John Middleton, and consisted of the companies of Captain Robert Turner, Captain Ambrose Tyndell and Captain Nicholas Devereux. Phillip Cotton was provost marshall, Richard Greville was quartermaster and William Bickerton was wagon master. The unit served in the Edgehill Campaign and took casualties but whether in the main action or on escort duty to Hampden's column is unclear. At the end of the year the regiment was stood down and most of the men returned under Turner to the Lord General's Regiment of Foot, whilst Devereux remained in the West under Colonel Thomas Essex, and Tyndell became a reformado. Devereux's later became a regiment of Foot and served as part of the Gloucester garrison during the siege, after which it took part in Massey's Severn Campaign and eventually became the garrison of Malmesbury in Wiltshire.

For the campaign against Reading, Essex was joined by the regiment of Colonel George Melve. This was a dragoon regiment originally raised in London and Southwark for service in Kent under Colonel Sir John Seton. On 8 October 1642 it had received '9 dragoon colours with staves, belts, boots and swivels, and 9 pairs of tassels and strings' at a cost of £15/15/-. [15] At the end of 1642 it consisted of eight companies.

10 T.N.A. SP 28/4/189.
11 T.N.A. SP 28/4/291.
12 T.N.A. SP 28/2A/326.
13 T.N.A. SP 28/2A/328.
14 T.N.A. SP 28/2A/339.
15 T.N.A. SP 28/2B/674.

Table A.III.3: Colonel Seton's Regiment of Dragoons.

Colonel Sir John Seton	117 men
Sergeant Major John Dunbar	?
Captain John Sparrow	105
Captain Peter Marrow	87
Captain Robert Hardy	?
Captain Richard Fincher	?
Captain Jeremy Baines	?
Captain Thomas Ayloffe	57

Source: Drawn from T.N.A. SP 28/5.

By the spring of 1643 at least five of these companies were in Melve's regiment which on 29 April mustered 397 dragoons and was made up of the following companies:

Table A.III.4: Colonel Melve's Regiment of Dragoons.

Colonel George Melve
Sergeant Major Jeremy Baines
Captain John Sparrow
Captain Peter Marrow
Captain Robert Hardy
Captain Francis Middleton
Captain Thomas Melve
Captain Thomas Maynard
Captain Hercules Langrish
Captain Simon Matthews

Source: Drawn from T.N.A. SP 28/7.

Isaac Smithers was surgeon and George Fogg chaplain. The regiment took part in the siege of Reading and no doubt suffered from the same malaise as that which struck the rest of Essex's army.

For the Gloucester campaign the regiment was broken up, some of its companies going to join Waller's army, the rest were attached to individual regiments of Essex's Horse. This followed continental practice, which was also adopted by the Scottish army.

Table A.III.5: The Attachment of Dragoon Companies to Regiments of Horse.

Cavalry Regiment	Dragoon Company
Lord General's Regiment of Horse	Captain Jeremiah Abercrommy
Colonel John Middleton's Regiment of Horse	Captain Hercules Langrish
Colonel John Meldrum's Regiment of Horse	Captain Thomas Melve
	Captain Thomas Maynard

Quartermaster General John Dalbier's Regiment of Horse	Captain Thomas Bosherton
Colonel Sheffield's Regiment of Horse	Captain John Copley

Source: Drawn from T.N.A. SP 28.

The company of Captain Thomas Shilbourne is also mentioned in accounts and may possibly have been attached to either Balfour's or Behre's Regiments.

When Essex had to remodel his army in the spring of 1644, almost all the dragoon units were stood down. The exception was Abercrommy's Company of the Lord General's Regiment of Horse. Lieutenant Abercrommy had temporarily taken command of his captain George Dundass's 100 strong company, when the latter had been taken prisoner at Chalgrove and by the autumn of 1643 Abercrommy was confirmed in this post and commissioned captain. Captain Jeremiah Abercrommy, a young Scotsman in his early 20s, had begun his career as cornet in Colonel James Wardlaw's Company on 22 September 1642.

Captain Abercrommy's Company Musters

14 October 1643	52 Dragoons
November 1643	52 Dragoons
13 February 1644	77 Dragoons

Source: T.N.A. SP. 28.

On 3 May 1644 Abercrommy's complete company consisted of one lieutenant, one cornet, one quartermaster, three sergeants, three corporals, three drummers and 64 dragoons (26 without horses). At Tiverton it mustered nine officers and 65 dragoons. As mentioned in the chapter on Lostwithiel, Abercrommy and a number of his men were captured whilst covering the cavalry's withdrawal to Saltash. Lieutenant Robert Rynd took command of the unit. Rynd took muster of his surviving men on 2 September 1644 when the company consisted of two sergeants, two corporals, two drummers and 36 men. A month or so later, Abercrommy was released and once again took up his command which he held until, shortly after his marriage, he was killed in a minor skirmish on 10 March 1645. A popular officer, his death was much lamented and no further Captain of Dragoons was appointed. The Lord General's Company of Dragoons was reduced shortly afterwards.

Essex had used the dragoon forces at his disposal in all the text book ways of the time, from flanking the army deployment at Edgehill, to serving with the cavalry in advance guards and raids. At the siege of Reading, companies served their turn dismounted in the trenches with the infantry, and during the break-out from Lostwithiel had done sterling service covering the rear of Balfour's retreating cavalry. The general reduction in dragoon strength within Essex's forces very much reflected the changing nature of the lord general's army, from being Parliament's main field army to that of being just one of several and one very much reduced in size.

Appendix IV

The Artillery

Essex had a major advantage over his opponents, in that the nation's main stores of artillery and munitions lay within Parliament's control. The Board of Ordnance Headquarters was based at the Tower of London where the Great Storehouse contained the largest store of gunpowder in the country.[1] In warehouses which stood in the Minories to the north of the Tower, all kinds of military equipment were kept, and heavy guns were parked on Tower Wharf. However, a great part of these stores had been removed for use in the Bishops' Wars, and with the end of hostilities against the Scots, had been placed in the Manor House within the walls of the northern port of Hull. In May 1642, after the king had unsuccessfully tried to enter the town, Parliament ordered the majority of those stores and equipment brought to London by sea. Although not able to load everything, besides a large number of small arms, and 906 barrels of powder, the ships carried:

Equipment Transferred from Hull to London in 1642

49 pieces of brass ordnance
40 carriages with shod wheels
8 shod wheels
105 grenadoes
1,170 great cannon shot
1,066 other cannon shot
118 ladles, sponges and worms
20 veals (water carriers on wheels)
1 mortar piece
17 petards
200 vats, each containing four tents[2]

Because most of the senior officials of the Ordnance within the Tower remained loyal to the king, the newly landed supplies were not handed over to them but instead were placed in warehouses with the City of London. These Officers of the Ordnance were initially allowed to stay in post whilst there was

1 On the site of the present Waterloo Barracks.
2 T.N.A. SP 16/490/77.

some hope of reconciliation with the king, but by early June Parliament demanded that nothing was to go in or out of the Tower stores without the king's authority, as signified by both Houses of Parliament. It was clever wording that effectively prevented the transfer of anything. However, Sir John Heydon, Lieutenant General of the Ordnance, stalled by staying that he could do nothing without the permission of his general – Mountjoy Blount, Earl of Newport – and he was in York. Newport was a master of prevarication and sat on the fence in the early part of the war before siding with his friend Goring and defecting to the king. Dealing with the Ordnance was frequently a communication and administration nightmare.

View of the Tower of London after a 1643 engraving, redrawn by Alan Turton. (Turton Collection)

The train was a general name to describe the artillery but it was a complex entity. It covered everything that is needed by an army on the move and embraced not only its artillery but its baggage and thus, to some extent, the camp followers. Although the general of the ordnance had oversight of the guns and all things related to the train, it was the army's carriage master who had a key role within the set up. He was in charge of ensuring the wheeled vehicles kept moving and were supplied with sufficient draught horses, hence the Ordnance was essentially civilian but its transport was military. Although Essex had the Board's HQ at the Tower, the artillery caused him continual problems at many levels.

By August the political diplomacy came to an end, and on 17 August, an order was issued for the taking into custody of all pro-royalist officers, but Heydon and other senior officials managed to escape and join the king. On 20 August, the Committee of Safety took nominal charge of the stores and from the remaining staff, a number were promoted to fill the posts of the missing higher officials. Seven days later Essex ordered the seizure of wagons and equipment which had been secreted by Heydon at and near his home in the Minories. Shortly afterwards, a further 75 guns were discovered near Woolwich which had been destined to be smuggled to the royalists at Newcastle.

With the Ordnance Office sorted out, Essex could now prepare his Train of Artillery. Shortly after Essex's own installation as lord general, John Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough was appointed general of the ordnance. Peterborough, who was suffering from consumption, and would die in June 1643, had little or no military experience, being chosen purely because of his aristocratic standing and, it was said, pressure from his anti-monarchist wife. To support this nobleman, a professional soldier and engineer was chosen as his lieutenant general of artillery. He was a Frenchman, Philibert Emmanuel

de Boyes who had first come to England to offer his services in 1639 and had been engaged to construct defences at Newcastle and South Shields against the Scots. He obviously knew his profession well, and his surviving account book shows the detail required in building up a train of artillery with its associated support services.[3] Thousands of items were purchased and brought to the New Artillery Ground where temporary sheds, workshops and a court of guard were constructed, at the cost of £227 15s 9d, to receive them; they included:

Items listed in de Boyes' Account Books

1,500 palizados with spikes
6 gins with ropes and shivers complete
100 numbered flags with poles to fix to wagons
120 arrows with heads for pistols and carbines

On 30 August, Essex issued a warrant to de Boyes to collect from the Tower the following brass pieces of ordnance, mounted upon field carriages with fore-carriages and all ladles and sponges belonging to them:

Pieces listed for de Boyes' to bring from the Tower

2x 12 Pounders
4x short barrelled 12 Pounders
1 Demi-Culverin
1 short Culverin
4x 6 Pounders
11x short 3 Ponder Drakes
6x mortar pieces[4]

Shot and powder were also delivered, which included 84 barrels sent down from the Hull stores, which had to be dressed and dried at a cost of 14s per barrel.[5]

All the guns mentioned were cast brass (bronze) which was favoured by gunners who considered them safer to use than cast iron although iron guns cast in England at the time were possibly the safest in Europe. None of the guns were 'battering pieces' or siege cannon, apart from the mortars, so all were field pieces. This very much reflects the way the future conflict was viewed at the time. It was thought the war would be quickly over after the first major field action against the king, and not become, as it actually developed, a long series of cat-and-mouse marches and drawn out sieges punctuated by a small number of big battles.

The gunners would have been professionals taken on as contractors, and were not regarded as being regular soldiers. Many of them had their dwellings near to the Tower of London where they could easily be found

3 T.N.A. SP. 28/131/part 2.
4 T.N.A. WO55/1754.
5 *Ibid*.

Reproduction of Civil War Saker with re-enactment crew. (Photograph by Alan Turton)

for hire for both land and sea service. Most of them would have learnt 'the art of shooting in great ordnance', as it was called, from years of practical experience although there were a number of printed artillery manuals available, some translated from foreign works, others by English writers. William Eldred, for instance, writing in *The Gunners Glasse* of 1646 gives instructions for loading a gun, and says 'let these words of direction be well regarded', he then lists them:

1. Put back your Peece,
2. Order your Peece to Load,
3. Search your Peece,
4. Sponge your Peece;
5. Fill your Ladle.
6. Put in your Powder,
7. Empty your Ladle:
8. Put up your Powder,
9. Thrust home your wad,
10. Regard your shot.
11. Put home your shot gently,
12. Thrust home your last wad with three strokes.
13. Gage your piece.[6]

To staff the huge operation that was the 'Trayne of Artillery' all sorts of specialists were required.[7] The men in charge took responsibility for the provision of ammunition to the whole army not just the guns so ensured they carried numerous and various barrels of powder plus an array of musket and cannon balls of all sizes. The train indeed moved the guns but also the infantry's and the cavalry's other equipment, including sometimes tents and hurdles for huts. The train's draught horses pulled the food wagons, officers 'necessaries', and sometimes a smith's forge as well as makeshift ambulances, etc. [8] The numbers of draught horses needed by the train made a constant demand upon an army and during marches halts had to be frequent in order to ensure the horses were rested, even more so than the men. Halts also

6 Eldred, W., *The Gunners Glasse* (London 1646).

7 Spelling for the 'Trayne' varies. We prefer 'train' although use 'trayne' if it appears in contemporary documents.

8 The wounded were often transported in cavalry forage wagons where the grass and hay would at least provide some relief from the jarring of the unsprung carriages.

gave time for enough grass to be cut, and wheat or oats to be requisitioned. Transporting all this and their own guns about the countryside was a mammoth task requiring exceptional organisational and administration skills, more than a basic understanding of engineering, animal husbandry and diplomacy; plus vast quantities of material, seemingly limitless numbers of horses, carriages, wagons, drivers, carters, pioneers, craftsmen and labourers. The train was a very expensive instrument, and one which Clarendon calls 'a spunge that could never be … satisfied.'[9] The man whom Essex detailed initially to ensure this behemoth kept moving was Carriage Master Generall, Thomas Richardson. De Boyes' account book lists the staff and their daily pay.[10]

Table A.IV.1: Rates of Pay per day from de Boyes' Account Book

Lieutenant General	£1 10s 0d
2 Clerks each	2s 6d
His Assistant	6s
Surveyor or Comptroller	10s
2 Clerks each	2s
1 Chief Engineer	10s
1 Clerk	2s
4 Engineers for ordering trenches, fortifications and approaches, each	6s
4 Clerks	2s
16 Guides or Conductors for the Works of Approaches for Fortifications and trenches, each	2s 6d
1 Paymaster	5s
2 Clerks, each	2s
2 Commissaries of the Ordnance, Materials and the Ammunition, each	5s
4 Clerks, each	2s 6d
20 Gentlemen of the Ordnance, each	4s
1 Master of the Carriages, or Wagon Master for the Artillery	5s
2 Assistants, each	2s 6d
25 Conductors to attend him, each	2s
1 Principal Conductor for the Draught Horses for Munitions	4s
1 Commissary for the Draught Horse for the Train	4s
1 Quarter Master	6s
1 Master of the Miners	6s
2 Miners, each	1s
3 Captains of Pioneers, each	5s
3 Lieutenants of Pioneers, each	3s
3 Overseers, each	2s
2 Petardiers or Fireworkers, each	4s
8 Attendants, each	2s

9 Clarendon, op. cit.
10 T.N.A. SP. 28/131/part2/folios 75-80.

1 Master Gunner	6s 8d
3 Mates, each	2s 6d
20 Gunners, each	2s
30 Gunners, each	1s 6d
1 Provost Marshal	3s
3 Gaolers, each	1s
1 Battery Master	5s
His Assistant	3s 6d
1 Ensign	5s
1 Drummer	1s 6d
1 Trumpeter	3s
1 Master Carpenter	4s
2 Mates, each	2s
23 Other Carpenters	1s 6d
1 Blacksmith	4s
2 Mates, each	2s
6 Servants, each	1s 6d
1 Master Wheeler	3s
2 Mates, each	2s
8 Servants, each	1s 6d
1 Master Farrier	3s
6 Servants, each	1s 6d
3 Tent Keepers, each	1s 6d
9 Servants, each	1s
1 Armourer	3s
3 Servants, each	2s
4 Basket Makers, each	2s
1 Collar Maker	2s
4 Servants, each	1s 6d
1 Ladle Maker	2s 6d
2 Servants, each	1s 6d
1 Gun Maker	3s 6d
2 Servants, each	2s
1 Ropemaker	2s 6d
2 Servants, each	1s 6d
225 Labourers or Matrosses, each	1s

All these men had specific roles and responsibilities. However the plethora of titles and quasi-military styling made jockeying for them in the political manoeuvres of the period very interesting. What each man actually did is hard to specify but their areas of work included:

General Job Descriptions for Members of the Train

General of the Ordnance – could at times be a nominal title given to a senior man but it implies overall command of everything. It might be an award to anyone in a position to provide and/or finance the train.
Lieutenant General of the Ordnance – command of the artillery
Assistant to the Lieutenant of the Ordnance – shared duties of the above.
Comptroller – head of logistics and transportation of the train to a rendezvous.
Engineer – kept everything in running order and dealt with both mechanical and terrain transport problems.
Assistant Engineers – skilled men to share duties of above.
Commissaries of the Ordnance – supply of artillery materials and ammunition.
Commissary to distribute Victuals – feeding the men and horses.
Purveyor General – locating, purchasing and acquiring munitions and everything else needed by the artillery.
Wagon Master for the Artillery – maintaining and ordering of all artillery wheeled vehicles including carriages.
Principal Conductor – acquiring, allocating and looking after the draught horses of the artillery.
Quarter-Master of the Train of Artillery – provisioning of the artillery.
Captains of Pioneers – command of the labour force.
Lieutenants Pioneers – assisted the above.
Master Gunner – responsibility for every gun in action and for all aspects of artillery training.
Provost Marshall of the Artillery – policing and billeting of the artillery.
Battery Master – placing, organising and coordinating grouping of guns.
Fireworker & Petardier – preparing explosive devices.
Bridge-Master for the Train of Artillery – building bridges including those made of boats.
Physician – medical care of the personnel of the whole train.
Surgeon – surgical care of the personnel and animals of the whole train.
Gentlemen of the Ordnance – those who took care of everything else in a variety of roles both on and off the field specified by the general, usually experienced men.

In addition there was also de Boyes' own company of firelocks, with its Lieutenant, Ensign, two Sergeants, three Corporals, two Drummers, and 66 Soldiers, who incidentally were the only part of the Train to receive coats. The captain of firelocks was in effect head of security and defence of the whole train. Missing from de Boyes' account, but mentioned in other official documents[11] are the following personnel:

11 T.N.A SP. 28/140 part 17/402-404.

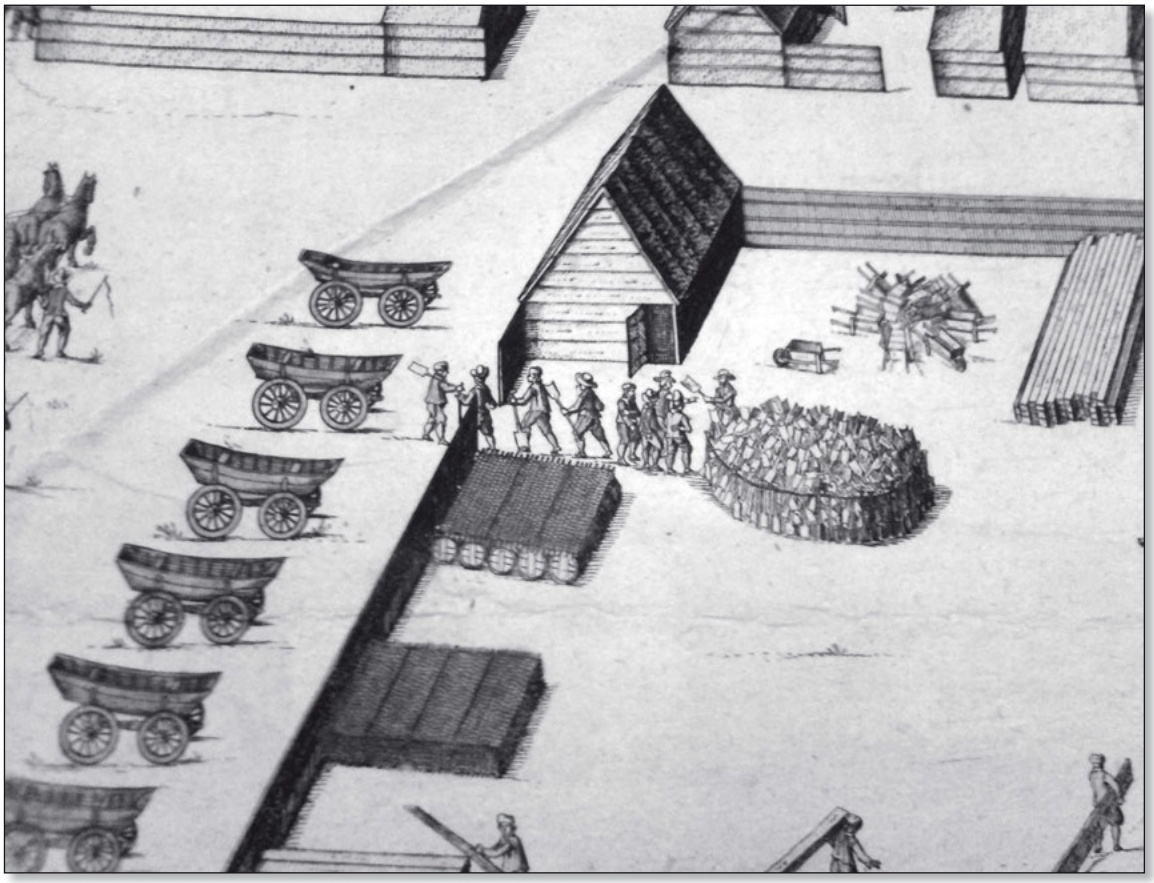
Table A.IV.2: Pay of Other Members of the Bridging Train

1 Chaplain	4s
1 Barber Surgeon	4s
2 Under Barber Surgeons, each	3s
1 Bridge Master	6s
His Assistant	3s 6d
100 Matrosses for Works About Rivers, each [the Matrosses were issued with swords]	1s

Bridge Master, Harman Browning, had charge of the Bridging Train which consisted of 20 large, flat-bottomed pontoons (each costing £15) which had been specially constructed in yards at Vauxhall. They were not completed by the time Essex's army had left London, but when they were they were floated downstream to Bankside, where they were taken out of the water and mounted upon new block carriages (each costing £14) to be carried to the Artillery Gardens. Here they were finished with a coat of pitch and were equipped with bridging timbers, 60 ash oars, ropes and 46 iron grapnels. Browning had gone with Essex so it was left to his assistant Lieutenant John Allerdine, with 80 Watermen to bring up the completed train when it was ready. As the main rival armies manoeuvred in the Severn Valley, the Bridging Train was escorted by 70 Firelocks across country to Gloucester, where the boats were dismounted, and berthed. The horses and block carriages for the Bridging Train do not seem to have been kept at Gloucester and were probably sent on to the main army. Allerdine and some of his men were to remain based at Gloucester for at least a year, which meant that when Essex required the Thames to be bridged at Putney during the Turnham Green action, Browning had to purchase or commandeer civilian lighters and barges for the construction.

However, it was the guns themselves that most people think of as the central element of the train. There have been several expert books written about the artillery of the civil wars and there is little to be gained by repeating it here. However there are one or two important aspects that need mentioning that directly impinged on Essex's army.

During Tudor times, Henry VIII had overseen and financed developments in artillery design and manufacture and his style of guns were still in use during the seventeenth century. Metal barrels were cast from various proportionate amalgams of bronze, iron or brass according to the specifications of the person placing the order. Bronze resists corrosion better than iron and it can also withstand greater pressures without cracking. It was however a 'softer' component and reportedly gave problems in the casting. The introduction of muzzle-up pouring allowed better quality metal to form the chamber and thus permitted parallel bores which saw the appearance of the famous long guns. The development of better and faster gunpowder production techniques in Germany gave rise to a dramatic improvement in quality of propellant. And, finally, the shift to cast iron rather than mason-cut stone projectiles led to heavier, more compact shot travelling longer distances and delivering greater damage on impact as well as encouraging a degree of conformity in production. By the civil wars these improvements



Camp of a bridging train, c.1630 engraving. (Used by kind permission of Dr. E. Gruber von Arni)

had been honed, and artillery was fast becoming a permanent feature of battlefield warfare, a feature which Essex understood.

However, although there had been a gradual development of a poundage system and a move towards agreement on calibres and weight of shot in respect to charge, standardisation was far from universal. There was still a diversity of guns in use despite Henry II of France introducing his *Les Six Calibres de France* for his artillery in 1550, which was copied by Maurice of Nassau (except that he styled his light pieces as 'infantry guns'). There was also a great pouring out of artillery manuals, books that expounded on the art of the gunner and these often included a codified table of types of guns. However, according to internationally respected, leading artefact scholar Kay Douglas Smith, 'the manuals say that guns conformed to a set system but the artefacts do not – the surviving guns just do not corroborate what the majority of the manuals say'.[12]

She further maintains that a lot of period artillery publications were written not to discuss or share knowledge about gunnery but simply to make money and that their authors knew little themselves, preferring to copy from previous books or pamphlets, including mistakes in classification and erroneous ways of thinking. 'Standardisation in the manufacture of guns is a nineteenth century concept applicable only in a post-industrialisation

12 Smith. K.D. Agincourt Conference, Southampton University, July 2015.

age'.[13] Consequently we must regard all the usual gunners' charts and precise measurements we see published with more than a little caution when seeking to discuss which guns were used by a certain army, especially as at the beginning of the British Civil Wars. Guns of varying ages and manufacture were gathered in from many sources so that the array of pieces assembled had little chance of standardisation and thereby posed problems for the supply of ammunition and appropriate quantities of powder.

Table A.IV.3: Types of Guns and their Ranges

Name of type of gun	Point blank range	Long Range
Demi-cannon	350 paces	1,700 paces
Culverin	420 paces	2,100 paces
Demi-culverin	380 paces	1,800 paces
Saker	300 paces	1,500 paces
Minion	280 paces	1,400 paces
Falcon	260 paces	1,200 paces
Robinet	150 paces	700 paces

Source: "Such ordnance as are usual in England" 1639 in Manganiello, S.C., *The Concise Encyclopaedia of the Revolutions and Wars of England, Scotland and Ireland 1639 – 1660* (Maryland, Toronto, Oxford, Scarecrow Press, 2004).

The first major action where the artillery of Essex's Army was engaged was of course Edgehill. Here the guns were deployed along the front of the army in the gaps between Foot regiments, but as already mentioned in the chapter on the Edgehill campaign, the whole train was not there; some of the guns were still on the road being brought up, which in turn required an escort of at least two regiments of Foot to stay with them. The absence of this force from the field possibly cost Essex the chance of a complete victory. Rightly or wrongly, the blame for the tardiness of the train fell upon de Boyes. As soon as the army withdrew to Warwick after the battle, he was dismissed from his command. He must have shown himself to be inadequate in other spheres for even his personal goods were seized. Wagon Master Thomas Richardson records that on 26 October, he 'received of Captain Debois, late Lieutenant General of the Ordnance' 45 closed and open wagons.[14] The command of the firelock company was passed to its lieutenant, Thomas Price. However Essex himself must have had some confidence in his skills, for shortly afterwards, de Boyes was appointed quartermaster general of the Foot, a post he held until his death the following year, his widow receiving on 17 August 1643, £50 of his back pay.[15] Sir Edward Peyto was chosen as the new lieutenant general of the ordnance and took up his post immediately.

In early November Peterborough himself was stood down and his replacement as general was the 58 year old Sir John Merrick, who had been intended to be Essex's sergeant major general until Skippon was eventually

13 *Ibid.*
14 T.N.A. SP. 28/140/Part 4.
15 T.N.A. SP. 28/9/96.

given this post. Merrick proved to be a safe pair of hands; successfully directing the guns at the Siege of Reading, and managing their progress and use during the Gloucester relief march, as well as playing a significant part in Essex's victory at the First Battle of Newbury. Serving under Merrick and Peyto was a young officer, Richard Deane, who would, in the coming years, become one of the leading artillery experts in the country, eventually rising to become a general at sea.

In the 1644 campaigns, Essex's train contained over 40 pieces of artillery. The reason for this increase in weaponry was that the lord general had been sent orders to take Oxford, which, because of its modern defences, would have presented a major challenge. However, as described in a previous chapter, the siege did not take place, and instead of static fixed siege lines, the campaign developed into a very mobile pursuit of the king and his army. The size and weight of the parliamentarian train was one of the reasons Essex gave to the Committee of Both Kingdoms for passing this pursuit over to Waller's much lighter forces whilst he marched to the relief of the West Country. The only known surviving piece of Essex's artillery is the huge basilisk known as Queen Elizabeth's Pocket Pistol. This 24' long, 12 Pounder bronze gun had been made in 1544, but was still a formidable weapon. Set upon a field carriage, it would have been over 36' long, which would have made it very difficult to negotiate the narrow lanes of the midlands, but Essex did take it to Cornwall.

Surviving financial accounts for 1644 show little evidence for the use of the guns until the engagements around Lostwithiel, but they do reveal the general day to day experiences of the Train as it marched from Burford into the West. For example:

Expenses of the Train in 1644

For two new pair of Demi Culverine wheels made near Blandford and brought to Tiverton £16 15s

For clouts and nails bought at several places especially at Tiverton most part of the smiths within seven miles compass being employed in that work during the time the Army stayed there … £15.

For lead bought at divers places and cast into musket shot during the march into the West the quantity of 5 tonnes £45.

For transporting of the Ammunition and other necessities for Plymouth to Lostwithiel £8 15s. [16]

The total bill for the wages paid for the train from when it left its winter quarters in May 1644 until its surrender at Lostwithiel was £3,528 19s 9d when all the guns and equipment were lost. Although part of Essex's train was saved, as it had been left behind at Plymouth, it is not clear of what that portion consisted. Again in October although it is clear what guns and equipment Essex wanted for his refit of the army at Portsmouth, what actually reached him is not recorded.

16 T.N.A. SP. 28/140/Part 8.

Essex's List of Equipment Requirements for the Train in the Portsmouth Refit.

Twenty four Close Wagons
Fifteen long open wagons or 24 Carts
Twenty Tumbrels to carry shott
Artificers tools of all sorts which will cost about £150.
Six hundred draught horses/six hundred pair of new horse harness with halters.
One hundred and twenty barrels of powder
One hundred barrels of Bastard musket shot
Six Tonnes of match
One Gin with a rope and appurtenances
6 pair of Hand Saws
2,000 Shovels, Spades and Pick Axes, ye shovels and spades of steel
One half tonne of ropes of all sorts
400 Axes, Bills and Hatchets
20 dozen of candles, ten dozen of links
200 Small Tents
200 great shott for every piece of ordnance
200 Ells of canvas for cartridges
four dozen of Bastard Musket Moulds with one dozen pair of Nippers to make shott[17]

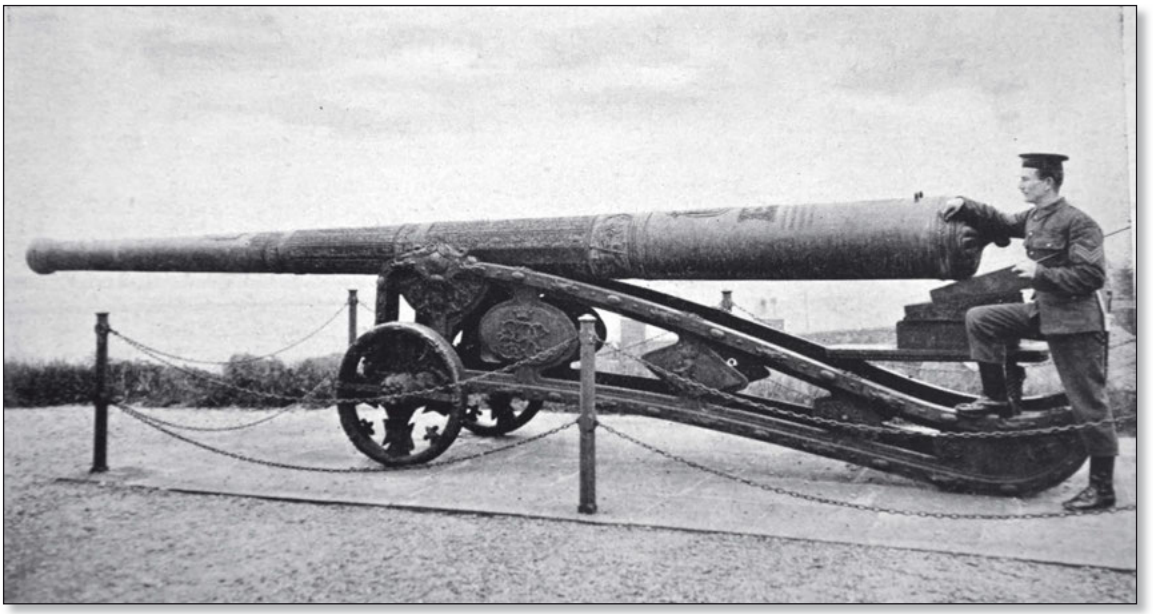
Also in the accounts there is a payment of £3 15s 'for two hair cloths to cover the powder being carried in open carts from Portsmouth to Basing and for wood to make lockers and for canvas and thread … For grease bought at Windsor for part of the Train that came from London to Basing and some at Portsmouth for the carriages there £1 10s'[18]

Included among whatever pieces of artillery Essex did receive were those in action at the Second Battle of Newbury where the accounts list:

> For raising batteries before all the guns at Newbury and other extra-ordinary service there £3 10s[19].

During this action Essex's infantry recaptured five of the guns lost at Lostwithiel which were being used by their temporary royalist owners. However Newbury was the last time Essex's train saw action and with the winter closing in, it was moved to quarters at Reading. At Reading it began to receive more regular issues of pay which it had not done since the disaster in Cornwall. On 26 December 1644 the accounts state:

17 Bod Lib Tanner MS. Vol. 61.f149
18 T.N.A. SP. 28/140/part 8/315.
19 *Ibid.*



"Queen Elizabeth's Pocket Pistol" at Dover Castle, from an old postcard. (Turton Collection)

> Paid to the train at Reading according to the muster then taken 14 days paid and to some poor men that then came out of Cornwall thirty five days pay in all amounting to £525 11s 6d[20].

With the coming of spring 1645 the train, along with the rest of Essex's former forces saw its reduction, although a number of its members including Richard Deane were transferred to the fledgling New Model Army.

The last pay accounts for the train are on 6 April:

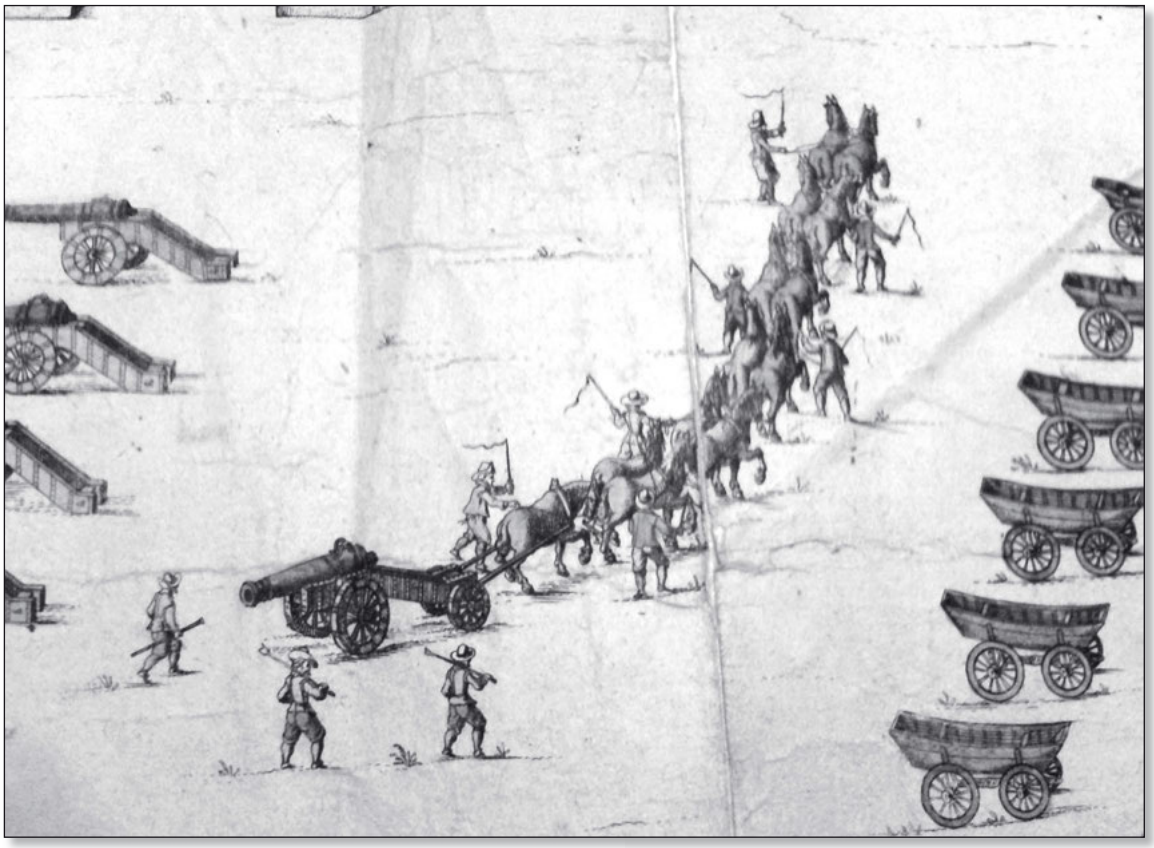
> Paid to that part of the train then at Reading upon the reducement 14 days pay according to the muster then taken amounting to £528.[21]

On 16 April:

> Paid to that part of the Train then at Windsor upon reducement according to muster 14 days pay amounting to £23 16s.[22]

After the teething problems of the Edgehill Campaign, Essex's train of artillery seems to have been diected in a proficient way. At the one major siege that the army undertook, Reading in 1643, the town's defences were quickly reduced by artillery fire despite Essex's ban on the use of mortars because of the indiscriminate damage to the civilian population they would cause. The same year, during the approach march to Gloucester, Merrick's handling of batteries of small guns in conjunction with some larger pieces to support parliamentarian advance parties sent to deal with blockading royalist Horse, proved very successful as indeed did his service at the First

20 T.N.A. SP. 28/140/part 8/313.
21 T.N.A. SP. 28/140 /part 8.
22 *Ibid.*



Large gun on the move, engraving of c.1630. (Uused by kind permission of Dr. E. Gruber von Arni)

Battle of Newbury. At Lostwithiel the guns were initially useful in defence but with difficulties of moving them in the narrow, enclosed lanes and up and down the inclined fields, they became somewhat of an encumbrance. Then in the appalling weather conditions, they became a liability to the army; although eventually they proved a powerful bargaining tool in the surrender negotiations. However post-Edgehill, Essex and his senior officers could have nothing but admiration for the way in which the train was managed and the artillery was handled .

Colour Plate Commentaries

PLATE A

1. Pikeman

A pikeman from the Earl of Essex's Regiment of Foot, during the Edgehill Campaign. He wears the tawny orange coat issued to the Regiment in September 1642. He is equipped with an English-manufactured pikeman's armour, but has lost the gorget that was issued with it and in its stead wears a knotted cloth around his throat. The London-made tuck (sword) is carried in a baldrick, and over his left shoulder, the strap is visible of the soldier's snapsack. The pikeman's shoes are the only other part of his issued clothing, and he wears his own civilian breeches and stockings. The pike he carries is an English pike of 16' in length, made of ash with a 4" long steel tip. The pikeman's role diminished as the war progressed, and after the initial issues of armour, there are very few accounts of any later supplies being provided for the Infantry.

2. Musketeer

Musketeers made up over half of each of Essex's Foot Regiments from their formation. This particular soldier is armed with a smooth bore matchlock musket, which has a fish-tailed butt, and is light enough to be used without the use of a rest. Ammunition for the weapon is carried in the bandolier, slung over the musketeer's left shoulder. Black powder is carried in the dozen or so bottles, or chargers, which hang from the bandolier, and the bullets are held in the pouch at its base. Below the bullet pouch can be seen a spare skein of match-cord, which when lit and cocked in the musket's serpent, was used to ignite the flash pan and thus fire the musket. The musketeer's secondary weapon was his tuck, but this was worn more for show than use, and the musket butt used as a club was a far more effective close-quarters weapon, indeed many reports on wounded soldiers record them being disabled by, "dry blows". This particular soldier wears a grey coat lined red issued to some of Essex's Foot in 1643/44, and upon his head he wears a knitted cap. In the large tubular snapsack, the soldier carried his marching ration of bread and cheese, and any spare clothes he possessed.

PLATE B

3. Dragoon

Initially, there were two Dragoon regiments in Essex's Army, Wardlawe's and Brown's, neither of which survived intact into the summer of 1643. There is no indication that they were issued with uniform clothing, so, like the cavalry, they were no doubt expected to supply their own. This particular dragoon wears his civilian clothes, consisting of coat and breeches and a brimmed knitted Monmouth cap. As advised

in the military manuals of the time, he does not wear riding boots, which would have hindered him whilst fighting on foot, but instead has acquired a pair of much lighter and flexible buttoned leather gaiters. However, the two regiments were supplied with their weapons, consisting of swords and firelock muskets. In the illustration, the dragoon is priming his firelock using a flask suspended from a bandolier, however in some cases paper cartridges were used, which were carried in a leather or metal box.

4. Trooper

This cavalryman has been issued with a back and breast plate, and a "Dutch pot" helmet, with its single sliding nasal bar. He also wears around his waist the tawney orange scarf costing 10 shillings which was given to all troopers in Essex's first army to distinguish them from the enemy. To save money, some troopers raised later were issued with only ribbons in lieu of scarves. The clothes he wears are his own, and consist of coat and breeches over which he wears his riding coat. He wears riding boots with their tops turned down, and upon his head he wears a grey felt hat with its wide brim turned up in the front, a fashion popular with professional soldiers of the time. He carries a "mortuary" sword, with a basket-hilt and a blade suitable for both hacking and thrusting. He would also be issued with a pair of pistols, which would be carried in covered holsters on either side of his horse's saddle.

PLATE C

5. Cuirassier

Only three large troops of Cuirassiers served in Essex's army, all as Life Guard units. This cuirassier is dressed in three-quarter length armour, which has been russetted. This is a process whereby the armour is treated with fats and acids to produce a surface layer of oxide which prevents deeper penetration from moisture. The closed helmet he wears is based upon one found in the moat of Whittington Castle, Shropshire. Cuirassier armour gave good protection against sword cuts, and a certain amount against pistol shot, but was heavy and uncomfortable to wear, particularly in very hot or cold weather. This cuirassier is armed with a long sword and carries a wheel-lock pistol which he is "spanning". The spanner could be carried on a cord worn around the neck, or attached to the pistol holsters on his horse. Around his waist he wears his issued tawney sash, but the rest of his clothes he would have provided himself including a heavy cloak or riding coat to be worn over the armour on the march.

6. Harquebusier

This fully equipped harquebusier is wearing an English three-barred cavalry helmet, which has been blackened for protection against the elements. It would be lined with wool or felt and when not in use, hung from the harquebusier's saddle. He wears a long sleeved buff coat, laced at the front. The long skirts of this coat give protection to the thighs of its wearer when he is mounted especially in conjunction with his boots fully pulled up. Although the buff-coat gives a certain amount of protection from wet weather, a cloak or riding coat would have been worn over it when the harquebusier was not in action. The ubiquitous tawney scarf is worn around the waist, and the harquebusier wears two leather belts over his shoulders, one, the baldrick, which has his basket-hilted sword slung from it, and the other, the sling, carries his short-barrelled firelock carbine. In his hand he is holding one of his pair of firelock pistols.

PLATE D

7. Ensign

This young officer is carrying the company colour of the lieutenant colonel of his regiment. He is fashionably dressed in a black suit, and a narrow-brimmed, "beaver" hat. Over his doublet he is wearing a short, sleeveless buff-coat and his tawney orange sash with its golden fringe. Beneath his lace collar, the ensign wears a black gorget, which signifies him as an officer. This ensign is wearing turned down riding boots, revealing heavily laced boot hose. Normally the ensign would be mounted on campaign, and only carry his colour when in action or on parade. On the march the colour would be carried by an NCO or a trusted soldier.

8. Drummer

The drummer was an essential part of any infantry or dragoon unit, providing not just the cadence for the march, but for transmitting his officers' orders on parade or on the field. He was ranked as an NCO, and in fact the Drum Major was the senior NCO of the regiment. The drummer in the illustration is from Skippon's Regiment when first raised in the autumn of 1642. We know from surviving delivery documents that red coats lined yellow were issued to all private soldiers and NCOs in the regiment. This drummer has augmented his plain soldier's coat with a red and yellow waistcoat and Montero cap. The field drum is carried under the left arm on a leather shoulder belt, but it could equally be suspended by a fabric sash. The drummer's only weapon was a sword.

PLATE E

9. Matross of the Bridging Trayne

Browning's Matrosses of the Bridging Trayne would probably have been recruited from London watermen. There is no indication of any clothing issued to these men, so they probably wore normal work wear. This matross is dressed in a grey coat which was common among seafarers and a knitted woollen cap. Beneath the coat he is wearing a shirt or waistcoat of yellow and red cloth, and a coloured neck cloth. He is wearing stockings and shoes for marching with the Trayne, but when aboard the pitch-coated pontoons, he would have been bare-footed. In his hand, he carries a grappling hook, which was used to secure the pontoons when forming a bridge. The only weapons issued to the men were swords.

10. Colonel of Foot

Officers wore what they wanted to wear, although it was quite common, as in this case, to wear scarlet breeches decorated with braid and buttons. This colonel sports a buff coat, again trimmed with gold braid, and laced with scarlet ribbon although the actual fastenings were hooks and eyes beneath the ribbon. His highly embroidered baldrick is held in place on his shoulder by a black ribbon laced through the shoulder of the coat. Around his waist the tawney orange sash is made of the finest silk and fringed with gold wire. The colonel wears his gorget beneath a lace collar and on his head in his tall, broad-brimmed hat, he sports an expensive white ostrich plume. He is armed with a basket hilted sword and a pole-arm known as a leading staff. This was used for directing the movements of his troops, and as a badge of rank as much as a weapon. He wears bucket-topped boots for riding on the march, but on the battlefield, he would have fought on foot along with his men.

PLATE F

11. Model of Cavalry Trooper of Essex's own regiment, by Anthony Barton, and used with his kind permission.

12. Model of Cavalry Trumpeter by Anthony Barton, and used with his kind permission

PLATES G AND H

Notes regarding the flags by Dr Les Prince

Infantry: The regimenting of the Foote was a recent innovation in military practice imported from the Continent. The colours carried by English regiments followed one of several patterns, the two most prominent being uniquely English. In the first of these systems the Colonel's company carried a plain colour with no devices; the Lieutenant Colonel's company bore a plain field with only a Saint George in the upper left canton (actually roughly a third the length of the field); the Major's company bore a single device, such as a star or lozenge; the 1st Captain's Company bore two such devices, and son on through the order of seniority. In the second system, the Colonel's and Lieutenant Colonel's companies bore colours as in the first; the Major's company carried a colour bearing a Saint George in the canton from the bottom corner of which issued a pile wavy, looking like a little flame. This practice carried on well into the nineteenth century with some regiments. In this system, then, the 1st Captain's company bore a single device, the 2nd Captain's company two devices, and so on.

Cavalry: Unlike the infantry, Horse units, although nominally grouped into 'regiments', continued the Mediaeval practice of independent troops following a Captain. We know, for instance, that trumpeters in the Horse bore the coat of arms of the commanding Captain, not their Colonel. Thus unlike the foote colours, horse cornets are of a decidedly individual character, sometimes bearing a similar coloured field within a regiment, but not always. Each field officer of a horse regiment was also captain of his own troop, which bore a cornet named for him. But general officers also appear to have had 'personal' cornets, the precise use of which can only be guessed at.

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Christopher Scott and **Alan Turton** have been working together on Civil War projects since 1975 when they were consecutive commanding officers of the Roundhead Association Devereux's Regiment; Alan became the Major General of Foot. Alan is a published military historian and his previous books include *Old Robin's Foot, The Chief Strength of the Army, Civil War in Wessex* and *Castles in Wessex*, and they first collaborated in writing *Edgehill, The Battle Re-interpreted* with Dr. Eric Gruber von Arni. Alan worked in civil engineering before becoming the Curator of the famous Civil War site of Basing House. Being retired Alan now gives lectures and talks to academic conferences and local history groups. He is a volunteer presenter for the Mary Rose Trust and a keen archaeologist with a lifelong fascination with castles. He has appeared in numerous films and TV documentaries and has had his own series for BBC South. Being steeped in ECW history they were approached by Helion to undertake a second collaboration on the Earl of Essex to fill a longstanding gap in the canon of published work on Civil War generals and their armies.

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Hey For Old Robin! was the cry of the Earl of Essex's army during the First Civil War as, contrary to modern popular belief, Robert Devereux was well-liked by the men he led. This book fills a gap in the literature of the Civil Wars, taking up the challenge to write a new history of Essex and his Army and examining the often-repeated view that he was a cautious dullard with little military skill. The two authors Christopher Scott and Alan Turton, both well known published military historians, present a more balanced view of Parliament's first Lord General, bringing him out of the shadow of Cromwell. In doing so they are not afraid to bite the bullet of period and modern criticism of Essex as a strategist and tactician, as well as his reported failings as a man.

Based on primary research, including site visits to scenes of his triumphs and disasters, they trace the story of the early campaigns, beginning with Edgehill, then Brentford and Turnham Green, the relief of Gloucester and the retreat to Newbury, the Siege of Reading, the Thames Valley Campaign, the disaster of Lostwithiel and the rebuilding of the army for Second Newbury. Whilst they leave the detailed examination of the various battles fought by Essex and his men to more specialist books, they tell the story of each of the campaigns and share their thoughts on Essex's problems and his decisions and actions. They also examine how the armies were constituted, officered, recruited and maintained, as well as its reductions and transfers.

In separate chapters they describe Essex's Foot, the Horse, the Dragoons, the Artillery and the Train, dealing with what the army wore, what it was paid, what weapons it used, the flags it carried and how it was organised, operated and fought. All this is set within a sound understanding and appreciation of the background of the seventeenth century and Essex's place in the socio-political zeitgeist as well as period military thinking and practice. Illustrated with a wealth of seldom-seen contemporary engravings of Essex's officers and friends and newly commissioned maps, as well as uniform and cornets & colours plates, this work is of great use to anyone with an interest in our civil wars including academics, local historians, re-enactors and wargamers.

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